

A GALLERY OF WOMEN

**Books by
JAMES WEDGWOOD DRAWBELL**

Fiction

**THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR . . .
GOOD TIME
FILM LADY
INNOCENTS OF CHICAGO**

Plays

WHO GOES NEXT?
(In collaboration with Reginald Simpson)

A GALLERY OF WOMEN

by

JAMES WEDGWOOD DRAWBELL

COLLINS
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TO
NANCY PEARN,
another remarkable woman

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PREFACE

I DID not set out to make anything like a complete gallery of the distinguished women of our day, or even to make what might be termed a "representative" one. I wanted to set down in my own way, and in some cases to emphasise by dramatisation, my impressions of the main features and characteristics of some of the outstanding women it has been my good fortune to meet.

It does happen, however, that the subjects of these sketches cover a very wide range of interests and activities, and I have tried in most cases and by various methods to bring to life something of the character of the subject, her background, and her point of view. I must in the very nature of things have missed some of the targets by a mile ; in others I know I have scored a bull.

So needless to say that I feel compelled to say it, no breach of confidence has been made in connection with this volume, nor have I trespassed on the hospitality or kindness of any of my friends. All the subjects have known that they were being shot at, have examined the cartridges, and have helped to raise the rifle to my shoulder. I offer to each of them my grateful thanks for her forbearance ; and my thanks also to my friend and colleague, Mr. Reginald Simpson, whose help made possible the sketch of Greta Garbo.

J. W. D.



ETHEL MANNIN

Photographed by

ETHEL MANNIN

"THERE," said a well-known author to me, "is a woman who owes all her success and notoriety to the way she parts her hair."

It was the kind of clever thing to say after a good luncheon. It rolled off his lips smoothly and effectively. A very good turn of phraseology to end a pleasant hour. But applied to Ethel Mannin it was foolish in the extreme.

There, if you like, is a woman whose style of hair-dressing has become known to thousands of people through clever photography and the power of the same press which she pretends to despise ; but there also a woman who has succeeded through her own ability, her opportunism, and her industry. Ethel Mannin's hair has had little to do with her literary success ; the grey matter under the hair has done the trick.

That grey matter of the brain is working all the time for Ethel Mannin. It never misses an opportunity of putting Ethel Mannin one step nearer to the place of her dreams and aims—but I doubt if she herself knows where that place is.

I remember telephoning to Ethel Mannin on the occasion of the unveiling of a memorial to the late Mrs. Pankhurst, and asking her to write an article for my newspaper on the subject. I suggested that women had not really gained so much through winning the vote ; that Mrs. Pankhurst had not done so very much after all for the average woman.

Ethel Mannin demurred for a moment. She doubted

whether she had time to write the article, and asked for a short breathing space to think it over. Within half an hour she telephoned to say that she could do it—that she had thought about it and agreed with me that Mrs. Pankhurst had not done too much for Ethel Mannin.

She said so in her article, which was a very good article indeed. Ethel Mannin could not write a bad article if she tried. She wrote :

Women have made their own freedom ; it had nothing to do with Mrs. Pankhurst. The war made the enfranchisement of women inevitable.

Women are emancipated to-day because of their emergence as wage earners, and because of the revision of the moral code relating to marriage and divorce laws and sexual ethics. The fact that they have a vote and are represented in the government of the country, has done nothing for them except add to their dignity. . . .

The feminists, before indulging in a lot of hot-air and hysteria, would do well to pause and ask themselves, in terms of practical things—What really has Mrs. Pankhurst done for me ? What has she—in terms of practical things—contributed to the greater happiness and well-being of women to-day ?

I suggest that, without in any way detracting from her courage and the sanity of her principles—the answer is *nothing*.

That would have ended it for the average woman novelist. She would have drawn her cheque for the article, bought herself a new hat, and forgotten all about it. But Ethel Mannin can take every minute that life gives her and dramatise it. Every incident, every little experience, has its significance for her. A telephone conversation can make another page of a new novel—a page crowded with the utter futility and

fatuity of Life—which Ethel Mannin must surely think of always with a capital L.

Behold, then, *Ragged Banners*, an Ethel Mannin novel which appeared ten months after the publication of her Mrs. Pankhurst article; and this picture of her heroine on pages 309 and 310. Myself I see referred to by the name of Sonning.

She stopped and pressed a hand to her forehead. This was awful. She glanced at the typewritten sheet in the machine. One had said it all before, been saying it for years; every one who had ever done any journalism had said it, all this stuff which spelt woman with a capital W and babbled of careers and "modern woman," and "the average woman," and "every woman," as though there were any such thing. . . . Turning out this ready-made thought simply by pressing a button labelled "copy." . . .

Her fingers rested on the keys again and the cigarette dangled at a corner of her mouth, keeping the smoke away from her eyes. . . . The telephone bell crashed in on her thoughts. Lattimer sprang up. "I'll answer."

She typed on, hearing him answering. He called across to her, his hand over the mouthpiece, "Sonning of the *Courier* wants you. Are you in?"

She jumped up. "Oh Lord, yes. One's always in to one's bread and butter."

She went over to the table where the telephone stood and sat down.

"Yes, this is Mary. Yes, pretty busy; working against time to get the new book done, you know, and have to keep knocking off to make money." She listened for a few moments. "But I don't feel that Mrs. Pankhurst has done anything for me. I never use my vote. What? On those lines? No, Freddie, no. I can't say I regard her as the benefactor of the regiment of women. If I can say— Oh, all right. Mary Thane says, 'The Vote Means Nothing to Me . . .' A thousand words. When do you want it by? Tomorrow morning—yes, if you'll send round for it.

All right. . . . Yes, in the morning, it will be ready by ten. Cheerio."

She rang off. "He wants it for this Sunday. I'll not have to make a late night of it, Stephen, or I shan't be up in time to get it done by ten." She went back to her typewriter.

And then a little later on, on page 315, the last page of the book, when in the midst of a party, one realises (as one always does at a party) the Awful Nothingness of Life, this :

She heard it all, and for a moment she wanted to cry out that it didn't take courage; one carried on simply because there was nothing else to do; life flowed on and on with it; one danced and drank champagne and turned to rend God in the dark—it was all part of the business of living. . . . In the morning she would be at the typewriter, telling the world What Mrs. Pankhurst Never Did for Me. . . .

Suddenly she laughed, and looked up into gay blue eyes.

"Don't keep it to yourself," he urged. "Is it a good joke?"

"The biggest there is."

"Tell me."

"It's all in one word."

"Love," he said promptly.

"No. Life."

* * * * *

And that is why Ethel Mannin does not owe her success to the way she parts her hair. She can see life and express it. There is for her a significance in the ordinary and everyday which escapes the unfeeling and the unobservant. She can stand objectively outside herself and her acquaintances and see what they stand for. And she believes that what affects her is likely to affect many other people.

She was bitterly criticised when, losing a very dear

friend who committed suicide, she wrote an article about it in the *Daily Mail*, and later devoted nearly the whole of a chapter of her book, *Confessions and Impressions*, to the tragedy. That is just the sort of thing that is not done, people said; how can a woman who has lost some one near and dear to her write about the experience?

This was her reply:

There will be those, I know, who will say that I should not write of this disaster; who will accuse me of the novelist's trick of dramatising one's own emotions, of using a tragic experience as "copy." But I doubt very much whether one is capable of dramatising the sort of experience which literally shakes life to its foundations; I think that it is only the lightly felt things of one's life which one can dramatise—one does it then, if one does it at all, with an unconscious desire to give them greater depth and importance. . . .

I should be guilty of gross dishonesty were I to write what purported to be the story of my life and omit the most profound experience both of happiness and suffering I ever had—it would be like omitting to deal with my marriage and motherhood. But even those experiences could have been left out with less dishonesty than this, for it would be the sheerest humbug to pretend that these things were more important, or even as important; neither the experience of marriage nor of motherhood revolutionised me as did this chapter of my life, or were in themselves, as emotional experiences, as vital. There is nothing very remarkable either about getting married or having a child; bearing children is not a soul-shattering experience, nor is it the only form of creating life, nor the most important. I refuse to subscribe to sentimental cant on the subject. But when a human being who has always lived shut up in himself can emerge and love another human being, a miracle has happened; one has created life itself.

It takes courage to write that, particularly in a country where the human being is believed to possess neither feelings nor emotions.

But Ethel Mannin has never lacked courage.

At fifteen she was working for her living, earning 23s. a week as a typist with Sir Charles Higham's advertising agency. At sixteen she was writing advertisements and running two business magazines. At seventeen she was publishing her own stories, articles and verse in a monthly magazine which Higham left her to produce. At eighteen she had her first love affair with a bank clerk in the O.T.C. At nineteen she was married and had a baby daughter and was struggling to look after the child, write books and help her husband to keep the wolf from the door. She was twenty-two before she had worn her first evening dress.

She had the courage to destroy her early unprinted novels on the advice of Herbert Jenkins ; the courage to sit at her typewriter all day turning out cheap novelettes for which she was paid at the rate of a guinea a thousand words, when all the time she wanted to be writing something that expressed something of herself ; the courage to resist the natural maternal love for her child which spoils most children, and allow the girl to develop alone.

She had the courage to support the pioneers of the new education—A. S. Neill and Bertrand Russell—by sending her daughter to A. S. Neill's "free" school which is run very much on the lines of the school controlled by Dora Russell described in this book.

She is wholeheartedly for the new education, and is bitter about the old system which leaves children in that state so trenchantly described by H. G. Wells : "the same state that you would be in, dear reader,

if you were operated on for appendicitis by a well-meaning boldly enterprising, but rather overworked and underpaid butcher-boy, who was superseded towards the climax of the operation by a left-handed clerk of high principles but intemperate habits—that is to say . . . a thorough mess."

To-day at thirty-three she is one of our most sensitive and industrious writers. Is she sincere? Desperately.

Desperately, indeed, is the right word. She has a *desperate* need of expression, and into each book she puts so much of herself and her inhibitions and frustrations that the reader winces. Every Mannin book is a confessional. One overhears too much. Each new novel, you feel, is one more milestone on the road of her ultimate delivery from all the torturing elements within herself.

The day will dawn when she will be finally delivered. In thanksgiving she will go out that evening to celebrate, probably to a party; and a new book, full of that party, will be born within her and yell for publication.

But she is sincere, with a genuine sense of literature and a feeling for words that is like an ear for music. She has a pride in her work which I admire, and not long ago when a firm of publishers reissued some of her earlier "noveletty" stuff, she wrote to every newspaper editor pointing out that although the firm was perfectly justified in so doing, she hoped that editors would differentiate between the old work and the new and not treat the reissued matter as if it had been written by the Ethel Mannin of to-day.

That was the act of a person who believes in her work—almost in her mission. The newspaper editors —rum kind of fellows, you might gather from her

own novels—realised this fact and respected her request.

* * * * *

She is a disappointment in her appearance in real life. If you have judged her by the well-known photograph you will be disappointed when you meet her. If you have read her own words—"I have always been wildly indiscreet and the result is that I have had a full crowded life. . . . Heavens, how one has wept, but heavens how one has laughed and loved and delighted too"—and visualised a tempestuous child of nature, some of your faith will be knocked sideways.

She is small and rather mouse-like. She does not seem to care—or know—much about clothes, judging from the times I have met her or seen her in public. She is excessively shy. She was "agonisingly shy" in childhood and has carried this trait with her into womanhood. I like it—in moderation. I prefer it to the hardness and assuredness of the society women who haven't a thousandth part of the something in Ethel Mannin that makes her what she is.

I like, too, her unpretentiousness and her modesty. She speaks quietly. She has that sense of her own insignificance which all intelligent people have. But that does not mean that she has not her convictions. Anything but that!

But if you have expected *la grande femme* of a score of wonderful love affairs, you will be grieved by the appearance of this little woman who might have strayed out of the Wednesday afternoon meeting of the Peebles Mothers' Union for a breath of air. Can this possibly be the woman who, in print, declared so boldly that "a little more going to bed with the

right person would be of great value to the majority of women in this country"?

The first time I met her was at a strange function—a final judging of a crowd of girls drawn from all parts of the country in a beauty competition. It was downstairs, somewhere in the Savoy Hotel in one of those huge rooms which they use for ceremonies of this kind. Ethel Mannin was one of the three women judges, and I think she was acutely uncomfortable.

There was the usual lunch preceding the affair, and the usual cocktails preceding the lunch. The usual chatter and gossip and laughter accompanied the cocktails. It was a jolly, noisy business with lots of good fellowship, and all that sort of thing. You couldn't take a sip at your drink without some one knocking your elbow and spilling the gin over the floor. Very amusing, if you like that sort of thing.

I wandered out of it all to be superior and have a look at it in perspective, and noticed a small, meek woman standing by the door. She was particularly noticeable in that noisy crowd because of her quietness and aloofness. A few years older and I should have guessed her to be one of the girls' mothers come to keep her daughter from harm. A refreshing sight. It made me rude enough to look closer.

Then something about the face caught my attention. Even at that time the famous photograph had done its deadly work. I moved tentatively in the direction of this nice woman.

"It can't be?" I said to her.

"I'm afraid it is," she smiled quietly. She has a slow, intimate smile.

"Not Ethel Mannin? Not possibly?"

"Yes. Guilty."

" But I thought it was only a rumour. There isn't really such a person ? "

We stood for a few minutes together. Everybody had told me about her brilliant wit, her epigrams, her caustic comments on people and things. Particularly things. I waited for the fireworks. But none came.

We chatted as if she had been just an ordinary nice woman and not that famous person of the photograph at all. It was grand. She was shy and quiet and mouse-like. She had not yet written that immortal line about Heavens how one has wept, but heavens how one has laughed and loved and delighted. Possibly the lunch had something to do with the inspiring of that.

Then Storm Jameson came up and joined us, and shortly afterwards Ethel Mannin was led away, faintly protesting, I am sure, to pass judgment on the beauties

* * * * *

She will never let an editor down. You can ask Ethel Mannin to write an article for you and know that you will get the goods from her. And on the promised minute I have never seen a bad bit of work come from her typewriter. She is conscientious to the *n*th degree. She knows her job : she is a wonderful worker.

She has been through the mill and deserves the position she has won through to. I believe that when she has got rid of all the strange expressionistic stuff that she now indulges in, she will write a really good book. How she will hate me for saying that, and how I shall deserve to be hated. Any one who has sweated over a typewriter, grinding out of herself the amount of competent stuff that Ethel Mannin has grinded out, has a perfect right to hate and to murder.

Judge by what we do now, she must cry, not by what we might do to-morrow !

All right. The last time I saw Ethel Mannin was in the same Savoy Hotel. She was sitting in the lounge of the grill room waiting for some one. On the table in front of her two half-crowns lay in an ash-tray, apparently in payment for some drinks.

I raised my eyebrows.

" Not mine," she said in answer.

" Somebody left in a hurry ? "

She shook her head.

" I think I'll keep you guessing."

That problem kept me guessing for a long time. I am still waiting to read an Ethel Mannin novel with the incident described in detail. Who was the fellow who rushed out of the Savoy Grill, suddenly aware of the Awful Nothingness of Life, leaving the money for his drinks in an ash-tray ?

When Ethel Mannin forgets to put that story in a novel I shall know that she is away, singing, on the right road.



Photograph by
PINCHOT

DORA RUSSELL

IN the classroom of this modern school, high up among the Hampshire hills, half a dozen children are packing food into tins for the afternoon picnic.

A boy of eight immediately in front of me trims his bread and butter and jam sandwiches with serious concentration. They do not at first fit into the shape of his rectangular tin, but are at last persuaded, with sundry bitings and lickings, to allow the lid to fall into place. He grins quietly to himself with satisfaction.

He is a strange sight to my eyes, used to the dolled-up neatness of the children in the London parks and gardens. He is dressed, on this warm, late-summer afternoon, in a red bathing suit, which has been let down from the shoulders and is held in position round his middle by an old knotted boot-lace. The top of the bathing suit falls carelessly about his legs, meeting at the knees the tops of his black Wellington boots. On his head a bright blue woollen cap pokes its knitted peak into the air at a jaunty angle.

He lifts his head, wipes his jammy finger against his bare chest, and calls out across the room :

“Hurry up, Marcia ! I’m ready.”

Marcia is at the window near the teacher. I cannot mistake Marcia. She is a fair-haired girl of nine or ten years of age, in a white sweater and white shorts. She has expressed her egotism by stitching “Marcia” all over her sweater in a variety of colours. “Marcia” goes upward across her left breast in red wool, down her right side in black, straight over her navel in green, and fantastically across her shoulders in yellow.

She pays no attention to the boy who has called to her. She is concentrating on her own sandwiches. The other children in this room are busy with theirs, and as they bend over their tins, making quiet remarks to each other, calling out occasionally to the pleasant-faced woman teacher who is similarly engaged, I have time to study them.

In addition to Marcia, and he of the red bathing suit, there is a boy with long bare legs sticking out of tiny black shorts. He wears three woollen pull-overs of different colours, and has sandals on his feet. A multi-coloured scarf is wrapped twice round his neck.

"Can he possibly be feeling cold?" I asked Dora Russell at my side.

It must be seventy in the shade. Through the windows I can see the "tinies" of this school—the tots of two and three years of age—playing naked on the greensward in front of the house.

"Not in the least," says Dora Russell, "but he wants to wear his pull-overs and his scarf, so of course he does. They're all allowed to do anything they choose. David's expressing himself by wearing his pull-overs. He feels like that!"

Another child, a girl of ten, pads silently across the room in her moccasins. She wears boy's shorts over a blue bathing suit. On her head is a white handkerchief knotted at the four corners.

"Are we going to the sea to swim?" she demands of the teacher.

"I'm afraid not," she is told. "One of the cars is being used, and the other is going to the station."

"Oh, blast!" and the moccasins take her back to her tin of food.

"Where *are* they going?" I ask Dora Russell.

"The usual afternoon picnic. Anywhere they like.

They can go separately or together. Mostly they stay together. They'll probably go down to the pool."

The teacher at the window is making no effort to control or discipline the children—in the ordinary sense of these words. They move about the room at will, they go out into the passage and collect from the coats, shoes and hats on the pegs such articles of adornment as they desire. They come back into this pleasant, airy room and pick up their food and depart singly—in pairs—in a little party. They come and go just as they please. They make their own decisions. No one attempts to interfere or determine their conduct.

They are quite unconcerned about me, standing here among them with Dora Russell. There is no self-consciousness about them, none of the sickening coyness which so often afflicts youngsters in the presence of their elders. These queerly-dressed children are assured, confident little people, doing what they want to do. They appear to have no fear in them, no ordinary sense of "guilt." They hardly seem to notice me; they are much too intelligently busy with their own affairs.

Even in the midst of picnic preparation one boy is writing in a note-book.

"He's finishing his lesson," Dora Russell explains.

"Does he have to do lessons?" I ask, with what I fondly imagine to be irony.

She shakes her head.

"Of course not! There is no compulsion. If a child does not want to come in to lessons, he stays away and does what he wants to do. We find that in this way they want to do the lessons. The lesson becomes not a burden and a task but something the child wants to do of his own free will."

I look about this room with its drawings and paintings by the pupils, with its books and soft colours and its tiny tables dotted about the floor, with its wide windows looking out on the sunny lawn. With its youngsters who are being encouraged to develop their own personalities.

I remember my own childhood and school days. I remember the "musts" and the "must nots," the taboos and prohibitions and punishments. School collars were pulled on to my neck so that I should look clean and tidy and "presentable." I was thrust—as so many of my contemporaries were thrust—into suits that were not a bit of good for wiping jammy fingers on; my world was a world determined by men and women with an outlook thirty or forty years older than mine, by men and women who never tried to understand me.

These children appear to be happy. They say frankly what they think, because there are no consequences for saying what they think. Their conduct is not moulded into a pattern to please their elders. There is no sign—in this room—of the usual toadying to adults.

They are not, however, the kind of children that a fond parent would bring into the drawing-room at just this hour of tea and parade proudly in front of visitors. No parent, unless the understanding ones who send their children to this and similar schools, would acknowledge this bunch of scallawags in pull-overs and bathing suits. In any ordinary home they would be hustled off to the bathroom to have some of the grit taken off them before changing into fresh clean linen.

There are twenty-eight of them in this school, boys and girls drawn from all kinds of homes, the children

of parents with the modern outlook. Many of them have homes in America to which they return during the longer periods of holidays, accompanied by a nanny from the school. Their ages range from fifteen months to fourteen years, but it is Dora Russell's desire to have them older than that, so that she can take them from the nursery and part with them when they are ready for the University.

Their teachers have all the usual qualifications for teaching, plus the essential belief that the child is a person with the rights of a person—the right to develop himself in a world of other children, the right to grow up naturally without fears or repressions or inhibitions forced into him by elders who cannot or will not understand him.

"Most people don't appreciate that the child is an individual who has to have contact with other child individuals like himself," says Dora Russell, as we walk out of the classroom, through the wide hall, out through the main door into the sunshine. "They *will* insist on children following lines of conduct which are alien to natural child development and which are, in the main, lines of conduct devised to give the parents an easy and selfish existence. The result is that all of us spend the greater part of our adult lives clearing up, if we can ever successfully clear up, the mental messes which were begun in us in childhood, and are the products of our parents and our parents' parents."

She pauses to survey the scene in front of us.

"I want these children to begin *right*! I want them to have no fear, but to have complete freedom of expression so that their true individualities will be developed."

On the sun-splashed green lawn four children are

beginning right. One—two years of age—without a stitch of clothing, leaves his nanny and comes toddling toward us.

Dora Russell holds out her hand.

"Mammy," the child cries happily, and hugs her knee.

He looks up into her face and then glances at me. A healthy sturdy little devil if ever there was one.

"But why 'mammy'?" I ask her. "Do they all call you that?"

Dora Russell smiles broadly.

"They call me *mammy* and *Dora*, and sometimes *blasted idiot!* One of them called me an interfering old woman at our council meeting this morning! We have a children's council, you know, which gets things done in the school and decides most things. I was the chairman until this morning. Then some one got me out, because he thought that my having the casting vote was unfair. Now they run the school themselves. I haven't a say in it."

The baby toddles off again to join the three other naked children playing together Dora Russell and I stand in the sunshine.

It is pleasant to stand here, six hundred feet above the sea, in the very heart of Hampshire. The rolling hills, thickly covered with trees, stretch away from us to the hazy horizon. Here, in the centre of the 230 acres of land belonging to the school, you are cut off from the ordinary world. It lies away below you, distant and unreal. Far off to the south you can see the Isle of Wight on a clear day, and always a wind from the sea stirs the bracken and the trees about this school.

But you get the feeling that you are on top of an uninhabited world—that this grey building behind us

has been left high and dry on a beautiful island when the rest of the earth was submerged in some unrecorded catastrophe. The fact that you are eight miles from the nearest railway station of Petersfield sharpens the sense of lovely isolation.

Dora Russell is looking extraordinarily well this afternoon. Her firm, Red Indian-like face is burned brown by the sun. Her hazel eyes are clear and frank and smiling when they look at you. She smiles a lot, this woman, but the long mouth can be very definite when she chooses.

She is a small, clear-cut person in a loose-fitting, flowered dress. Her head is uncovered, and her brown hair is parted in the middle, drawn straight down over the ears, and gathered in a "bun" at the nape of her neck. Her brown legs are bare, except for short white ankle socks, and show innumerable insect bites. Her feet are encased in great square suède shoes.

An old ring on her right hand is the only piece of jewellery she wears, and I think of her at this moment as a very forthright, unpretentious person who cannot be bothered by the silliness of the world. She insists on being known as Mrs. Dora Russell, although she is Countess Russell. She does not approve hereditary titles, and had what she calls the "misfortune" to inherit one.

She smiles her merry smile.

"Now where would you like to go? These older children have gone off for their picnic. I think there'll be some smaller ones in the lab. Would you like to go there and see what they are doing?"

I answer half-absently that certainly I should like to see the lab. and the younger children there, for I am still thinking of Dora Russell, and as she leads the way from the house and along a path through

the undergrowth, my thoughts are on this woman and the way she has elected to go.

This school is the joint venture of Dora Russell and Bertrand Russell. It came into being out of the firm conviction of these two people that the ordinary methods of teaching and training children were not only mistaken but were cruelly criminal. Together they sought to bring children up into manhood free from the complexes that beset so many people.

Dora Russell resigned her fellowship at Girton College to marry Bertrand Russell in 1921. The daughter of a civil servant who afterwards became Sir Frederick Black, she had a distinguished university career and gained open scholarships to Cambridge, the Double First Modern Languages Tripos, 1919, and the Pfeiffer Fellowship. Her early ambitions were for the stage, and she played minor rôles at the Old Vic., but she wanted to do more important work in life and her association with Bertrand Russell opened up the way.

Together they went to Russia and China, studying the conditions of the people at first hand. On their return Dora Russell threw herself enthusiastically into the cause of the working woman and the working mother, and in 1924 she stood (unsuccessfully) as a Socialist candidate for Chelsea, the main planks on her platform being motherhood endowment, proper care for women before and after the birth of their children, and pensions for widows.

I am thinking of this as her sturdy figure walks ahead of me. Her two children of this marriage are, of course, pupils at the school, which is also their home, but although they were in the classroom preparing for the picnic she did not single them out for special attention, or call to them—as most mothers

might have done—to come and say "How d'you do" to the visitor.

There is very little of that kind of thing about this school, and very few of the usual conventions are observed. You are expected to fit into the atmosphere of the place, to adjust yourself to the apparently casual way of running it. You are "one of them," and therefore their ways are understandable; or you are not, and their ways will never be understandable.

After five minutes' walk we come to a fair-sized hut standing in a clearing. At the open door four or five children are intently watching the lab. assistant prodding a lighted piece of paper with his foot.

They hardly glance up as we stop to look at them, but the master raises his head and smiles to us. He is a young man in an open tennis shirt and loose grey flannel trousers.

"Not much of a success," he says cheerfully. "We're trying to make fireworks for midsummer night. But this one isn't very good."

The paper fizzes and splurts beneath his foot. The children do not take their eyes off it.

"That's a good idea," says Dora Russell. "We ought to get some really good ones and have a fine display for that night."

"Let's make another one," suggests one mite of six. "This one's pretty awful."

"Right-o," responds the master, crushing the paper into ashes. "Let's."

We troop into the hut and I smile to myself as I observe the rig-outs that these children have clothed themselves in. One is in a bathing suit with bedroom slippers, a small girl has boy's trousers and Wellington boots, another has gym drawers and laced shoes without socks. All the girls have bobbed hair. All

the girls in the school have bobbed hair. They insist upon it as soon as they discover that they have their own rights.

A very tiny child—he is five, Dora Russell tells me, but he appears to be only about three years old—says in a mincing voice :

“ I want to make coloured water ! I want to make coloured water ! ”

Dora Russell whispers to me :

“ His development has been arrested, that’s why he talks in that way. He was a mammy’s darling before he came here. We’ve only had him a few months, but the improvement is amazing. He’s *finding* himself among all the other children.”

She indicates with a glance the girl in the Wellingtons.

“ That is another. When she came here at the beginning of the term she was very difficult. She had been a ‘ handful ’ to her mother, and a ‘ handful ’ at her previous school. She’s seven, and she just set out to do things as she had always done them. She didn’t want to eat, and said she wouldn’t eat. We just said ‘ All right, darling, you needn’t eat. It doesn’t matter. Just do what you like.’ She was terribly surprised. She had expected the kind of fight she’d always had. She couldn’t make it out at first. Now she’s as good as gold, and she’s gained five pounds in less than one term.”

The small boy pipes again :

“ I want to make coloured water ! I want to make coloured water ! ”

An eight-year-old boy playing at an open blow-lamp says impatiently :

“ All right, make coloured water then ! ”

The master says quietly :

“ Make it in this glass,” handing a jar to the tiny.

The small hands close over the jar. The piping voice exclaims :

" Have to clean out the glass first ! "

He goes to a tap and rinses the glass. The others pay no attention to him, but I watch him closely. He fills the glass with water, pushes his way carefully to a shelf containing dozens of bottles, climbs on a table immediately beneath the shelf and puts out his hand at the bottle of permanganate.

" Right first time," I murmur to Dora Russell.

The others are absorbed in their fireworks. The eight-year-old is absorbed in his blow-lamp. The tiny is absorbed in the making of coloured water. He pulls the cork out of the bottle, tips a little of the permanganate into the jar, and his coloured water is sparkling before his gleeful eyes.

" Coloured water ! " he pipes in triumph. " I've made coloured water ! "

The others are intent on their own jobs. The triumph of the tiny passes them by. But it is triumph nevertheless. The tiny has justified himself. In a world of clever grown-ups, who can do so many marvellous things, he has given water a bright and definite colour. He wanted to do it, and has been allowed to do it.

As we leave the hut, Dora Russell says :

" I know you've been interested in the shoes and boots they wear. It's strange that they should be so personal in their choice of footwear, but it is a very striking and common form of expression, and sometimes, of course, the Wellingtons hide a bandage. So many of these children must also, I think, have been uncomfortable about the feet before they came here.

" They run amok about foot things at first. The other day a girl was walking about with her shoes

unlaced. I offered to lace them for her. She was quite willing that I should do so, and I started to lace, but she mentioned as a casual afterthought that she'd unlace them again as soon as they were laced!"

"Doesn't it get a bit tiring?"

"Well, it means a lot of running about, of course, and you've got to have a great deal of patience, but it's worth it. You couldn't take on anything like this unless you wholeheartedly believed in it. That's why we have our teachers. They believe with me. The ones who don't never stay very long"

She looks straight up into your face when she makes a point, yet in spite of her directness there is something almost pleading about her . . . a kind of pleading in the eager face that you will see and approve what she is trying to do.

"And I couldn't possibly live an ordinary kind of domestic life now," she adds, "without hordes of children around me. Of course, it's tiring, but it's real."

We walk on in the sunshine in silence for a few minutes.

"And where now?" I ask at length.

"Let's go to the Art hut. Nobody will be there at this time, but I would like you to see some of the children's work."

The Art hut, like the lab., is a hut apart from the main school building. It is deserted on this warm afternoon, but it would not be true to say that no one is here. They are all here—all these little boys and girls. They are here in the paintings on the walls, in the models in the cupboard, in the unfinished drawings on the benches. You can feel them watching you as you look at their work. The room is full of them. Their personalities are not to be mistaken in this room, for

here they express their real selves and the things
"nearest to the heart's desire."

There is a certain piquancy, too, in seeing the work and guessing at the mind of the worker. Who is the boy, for instance, who has painted the ambitious modernistic seascape on the far end wall and inscribed on it : "*Hell's Bells and Buckets of Blood*" ?

"He's ten," Dora Russell informs me. "His father has boats, and they go away a lot together on a boat. He's in love with the sea and all things to do with the sea."

Hell's bells and buckets of blood ! What a boy ! What a lucky boy to be able to spread himself all over the wall like this with nobody to say him nay.

And surely the world will hear more of this other young genius who has modelled in plaster the figure of a street musician, and sardonically captioned it : "*I have a wife and 112 children at home*" ! What a sense of reality is here ! What penetration in so young a mind !

The room is full of young people with distinctive personalities. In all the paintings, in all the clay, plaster and wood figures, in all the faces and aeroplanes and ships, you get the force of definite character. These things did not happen haphazard. They were schemed and executed by little men and women with something to say.

Dora Russell's own son, John, twelve years old, is represented by work which is known technically as "lino-cuts," which might better be described as "linoleum printing." It is a form of printing that many other children would find amusing and interesting.

He draws his design—a landscape, a windmill on a hill, an old house—on a piece of thick brown linoleum.

He then tools away, much in the manner of an ordinary printing "line block," that part which is unnecessary to the printing of his design. He rolls an ordinary printer's ink roller over his linoleum block, and only the lines of his design pick up the ink. From this wet, inky block, he can make as many prints of his picture as he chooses, simply by pressing clean sheets of paper against it.

On the walls are many clever prints done in this way, and on the bench are several discarded or unfinished linoleum blocks. It must be a very satisfactory business to a young man of twelve to print his own drawings.

The children have received their inspiration for their art work from all kinds of sources. In the winter Dora Russell has a cinema for them, and many of the modelled figures in this art cupboard are of characters who stimulated their young minds first on the screen. Two figures from the film of "The Covered Wagon," for instance, are unmistakable.

There is in this room also the theatre curtain which the children designed and painted, when they performed their plays on a former occasion. I remember these plays, full of surprising and original observations on life. I remember particularly a reference to a famous public school, which clearly demonstrated these youngsters' contempt for the conventional. One of the characters in the play is suggesting that some one might be killed by putting poison in his tea. Another character protests, saying: "That's very bad form. We never did that at Harrow!"

Not a bad line to be written by a boy of eleven.

* * * * *

We go back toward the house for tea, but on the way we look in at the bungalow reserved for the tinies

of very tender age. There is a swing in the large room and two ropes with steel rings suspended from the ceiling.

On the walls are all kinds of weird paintings and designs of coloured paper. The youngsters tear and cut up these pieces of paper and stick them down on a white background. Their first efforts are usually crude, but after a time they develop a sense of form. The difference in the work of a beginner and an "expert" of two or three weeks' experience is very marked. The beginner's effort completely lacks form, consisting mostly of odd bits of paper pasted together anyhow; the child who has learned to train his hands and fingers and brain executes definite designs.

The work develops also a sense of pride in the worker. One little boy whose solitary contribution to the world's art is a splodge of violent water colours (all running into each other) on one of the walls, comes daily to look at it, points to it with affection, and says: "I did that."

A solitary boy of two and a half, naked except for his woolly vest, is astride the swing.

"Try to swing on it," Dora Russell encourages him.

He stands on the swing and bends his knees.

"Can't do it," he says, but continues to try.

We go on with our conversation behind him, but watch him meanwhile.

"Can't do it," he says again, still bending at the knees.

He succeeds in moving the swing a little forward, an almost imperceptible fraction.

"There it goes," Dora Russell says, as if it were the thing she had expected to happen. "Isn't that fun?"

"Can't do it," the child protests, but is obviously pleased at the praise.

"Try doing it sideways now," she suggests, seeing he is tiring. The boy responds, and does it sideways with the greatest ease. He does not know that he has been spared the humiliation of defeat in the forward and backward motion. He is conscious only of the new triumph of the easy sideways movement. There is nothing to be feared by him in this old swing!

We leave him still swinging, reminding him that it is tea time.

Tea time! The older children are sitting at small tables all over the hall, quietly concentrating on putting inside themselves as many pieces of bread and butter, as many bananas, as many cakes as possible. They pay little attention to us and we go through the hall and up the stairs to the night nursery to see the babies at tea.

They are sitting at one table, drinking milk and consuming cornflakes and bananas, double-baked bread and butter and marmite, bread and butter and treacle, cups of milk. One of them drops her enamel plate on the floor and is delighted with the sound. She picks it up, throws it to the floor, grins with pleasure. The others, imitative in a moment, follow suit. There is a pandemonium of plates landing on the floor.

The nanny smiles patiently and makes no attempt to reprimand them. It is a baby's idea of paradise.

"Yes, a bit tiring sometimes," I say to Dora Russell, who is actually enjoying it. "Heaven knows how you can stand it."

The din increases. A child yells for more food, thumps the table with his little clenched fists. The others do the same. There is plenty of food for

them all. They get as much as they want to eat. But that does not keep them from bawling for more.

And so, after tea, which Dora Russell and I take with the teachers in a room on the ground floor (the casually polite teachers who seem to suggest rather that one comes from a world which they have not much use for) we climb the stairs to the room at the very top of this house.

The tower is the room of Bertrand Russell—"Bertie's room," as Dora Russell calls it. The stairs lead right up into it, and from its windows in every wall I seem to see all the world. Here Bertrand Russell works. In this room, high above everything, overlooking his 230 acres, any man might well imagine himself a king. We are above the calls of the children. The wind from the distant sea flutters the curtains at the windows.

Dora Russell sinks into a chair, sinks a little thankfully into a chair, and takes a cigarette. We sit together among the books of this room and talk. Dora Russell talks, not only about children, but about the fathers and mothers of children, and their disregard for the welfare of children.

She is so obviously sincere in her beliefs. She believes that it is hate rather than love that rules the world, and that children are not the first but the last thing our society cares for. She believes that children have always been used to serve the purposes of the parents, right down from primitive times.

"Russian peasant fathers urge their sons to seek a healthy young wife," she says, between the puffs of her smoking, "so that through her and her children there will be many strong hands to till the soil. To this day, on remote farms in Canada or Australia, a family

of twenty or twenty-five will obviate the need of employing outside labour."

I mention that in *Sussex Gorse* Sheila Kaye-Smith has told the story of an English farmer who bred from a fragile wife that he might have sons to extend his domain by conquering the waste-land surrounding his farm. Their blood is spilled in the process, but corn and pasture rise where before there was nothing but heather and furze.

"The history of negro slavery in Southern America is a blood-stained epic on the same theme," Dora Russell says. "Slave women, slave children, slave men, from dawn to dark, from cradle to grave, spilled out their lives to create wealth for the patriarchal owners. So did the Jews in Egypt create wealth for Pharaoh, so did the families of China enrich the Son of Heaven and his Empire, so do the children of Japan to-day serve their father the Mikado, so all over the world have they toiled in the name of fathers and of kings."

So soon as there was any one with leisure to reflect upon human existence, she maintains, it was seen that the terms on which life could be lived were scarcely to be borne. Sex and food were compelling desires, and yielding to them brought with it submission to all the demands of current tribal morality.

"There is very little evidence of any conscious desire for children, or of love and delight in them as such, or of any sense of the joy of biological creation."

In our own day, she believes, children are still used by the parents. The rich educate their sons, "and at long last" their daughters.

"But upper-class education sets a man on the road to a dominant position," she says, rising and looking out through the window toward the Isle of Wight, "and it makes the daughter a more marriageable

commodity It means nothing about parental affection or love of children generally.

"Look how compulsory education for the poor was fought! And only yesterday bitter opposition to the raising of the school-leaving age came from parents of all classes, including the parents of the poor themselves!"

She is anxious to remove children from the subconscious desires of the parents. She believes that the dominant male impulse is to get and retain power over as many women and children as possible. Not in a moral sense, of course. She wants the education of children to be along lines that will allow the child to grow up untrammelled by the damaging influences of the parents—damaging because they so seldom take notice of the fact that the child is a separate individual from his parents.

* * * * *

She stands at the door in her flowered dress to see me off. Her brown, insect-bitten legs sustain her sturdy body in the sunshine. Her brown face smiles its clean, definite smile, showing a line of strong white teeth. A couple of naked tots play on the grass at her suède-shod feet. Behind her the grey, wind-swept building is echoing with the calls of children.

I get into the car. Dora Russell waves. Off we go down the drive. Half a dozen young savages have sprung up from nowhere and are mounted on the running board of the car.

"Get off!" orders the chauffeur.

They laugh at him.

He slows down and makes to get at them. They drop off into the roadway, lightly, skilfully.

They stand in the roadway as we draw farther and farther away, shouting and waving after us.



MADELEINE CARROLL

Photograph by

MADELEINE CARROLL

ACT I

Downstairs in Rules' restaurant in Maiden Lane. About nine o'clock on a late-winter evening—that between-seasons period in a London restaurant when dejected waiters have a moment to regret their past and reflect on the futility of all human endeavour.

I am discovered in the far alcove of the room, staring bleakly at the tablecloth. I am alone. My appointment with MADELEINE CARROLL was for eight-fifteen. I know now what men feel who live without hope.

I am deciding that my rule, unbroken until this night, of never waiting more than ten minutes for any person, is right—as I have always known it to be right. I am embarking upon a fine lonely argument with myself that inconsiderateness is the lowest form of intellectual dishonesty, when the door opens and MADELEINE CARROLL comes quickly down the room toward me. She wears neither coat nor hat and her fine blue eyes are searching the place in quest of me.

I rise, my theories about dilatory people forgotten. She stares at me, for a moment uncertain, as well she might be, since we have never before met; then she smiles to my smile and holds out her hand.

Madeleine (in what I can only describe as an "embracing" voice): I'm frightfully sorry. I'm awfully late. Do forgive me.

I (who was there at ten minutes past eight) : As a matter of fact I wasn't sure whether you said eight or nine-fifteen.

Madeleine (accepting my lie, I think bitterly, as her due) : Been out at Elstree filming. You know what it is. Got tied up with a lot of re-takes. Phew ! (She relaxes against the red plush back of the sofa.)

I : Have a glass of sherry ?

Madeleine : Love it.

The sherry is brought, and when we have ordered food we talk, as two strangers do, of the weather, of the new shows, tentatively of people we both know. And suddenly I discover that she is nervous. She is nervous, this beautiful girl with the golden hair and the blue eyes, and the wide expressive mouth. I am startled into silence. I have been prepared not to like this person whose loveliness is so disarming. Silently I wonder if, after all, she might be human in spite of her natural disadvantages. MADELEINE, who has been avoiding the subject that brought us together, thinks I am waiting for her to broach it.

Madeleine (with amazing diffidence) : I like your play.

I : Good.

Madeleine : Very much.

I (who can listen to this sort of thing for ever) : I'm glad. Tell me what you think of . . .

She tells me. The play is a dramatised version of a novel dealing with the surplus women of this country who will never be able to marry. Some one has suggested that it is a play for Madeleine Carroll. MADELEINE had telephoned me that afternoon saying

she had read it and would like to talk to me about it. She is talking now. I sit listening, watching the expressive face in front of me, guessing at the ambition and determination behind the eager words She is not a bit the beautiful but dumb wench I had expected.

Madeleine (fifteen minutes later, when the food has grown cold, and she is no longer nervous, but bright-eyed with young enthusiasm) : It's the kind of serious modern part I've always wanted to do. I feel it would give me a chance to get away from these lovely-young-thing parts that people will give me. I'm tired of being just beautiful on the stage. (Her eyes flash and I have the conviction that she means it) I want to show people that I can really act. But I never seem to get a play that lets me do that. I'd love to play Fay. I feel the subtlety of her and the pathos against that background of the girls' club. I know these girls' clubs ! (And with a complete humbleness) : Don't you think I could play the part ?

I (hardening my heart) : I'm inclined to think you're too beautiful for it.

Madeleine (with an expressive shudder) : Oh—h ! (She looks as if she would like to shake me.)

I (seriously) : But I mean it. The part—as you know—is the part of a girl who can't get her man. She's quite good-looking, of course, like thousands of girls. But not anything like you in looks. One's got to feel about her that she might have a really difficult time in bagging a husband. When you walk on a stage you look as if you could get any man !

Madeleine (almost fiercely) : Oh, but I know that woman Fay ! I can play her. I can make myself look just as she looks. I can wear my hair straight back

—this way ! (She puts her hands to her head and draws her hair back tightly from the forehead. It completely changes her appearance.) And like this. Look !

I (surprised in spite of myself) : I say !

Madeleine (in soft triumph) : You men ! You don't know what a woman can do with her looks.

She sweeps the plate of almost untasted food out of her way, and leans forward eagerly.

I : You'd better have something to eat. You looked fagged when you came in.

Madeleine (vaguely, her thoughts on work) : Oh—ah—a salad, or something.

The salad is ordered, brought, remains untouched. We talk of the play. She knows it better than I do. In her first reading of it she has got its shades and depths and significance in an uncanny way. I begin to think that her beauty can't be such a drawback after all. It's more than offset by her intelligence and understanding. She feels my resistance going and all at once, intimately, unaccountably, makes me her friend. I do not know how it is done. But it is done.

She shows me something of the driving ambition in her. Not in this first conversation, but long afterwards, she told me of how she left home with £5 and the resolve to make good. On this evening she talks of films and plays, directors and producers, actors and play "backers"—the men who risk their money on a show. She is torn—as she has always been torn—between the stage and the screen, and she asks my advice—as she always asks the advice of all her friends. I remember that this eager,

emphatic, yet curiously shy young woman with the most discussed face in England, is a B.A. of the University of Birmingham. And I reflect inwardly that she must be one of the strangest actresses on our stage to-day. We talk and talk, and in our talk we reach a complete understanding of each other.

In this mood we drink coffee, and look into each other's eyes, and tell one another silently that the world isn't such a big thing to conquer anyhow, and wander out into the night to sit in another restaurant drinking more coffee and look down on the silly dancers, and talk—work, work, work—half-way toward morning.

ACT II

There are three scenes in this act. The first is played out over the telephone, some time after the First Act, on a warm day in spring.

I (into the mouthpiece) : Madeleine, what do you think ? It's happened ! I've got a man interested in the play

Madeleine : Yes, but what about—

I : It's all right. He's got money. Lots of money. He wants to back it.

Madeleine : Hooray ! Who is he ?

I tell her.

Madeleine : Never heard of him.

I : Neither have I. But he 'phoned me yesterday and I saw him last night. Asked if I had anybody in mind for Fay's part. I said you.

Madeleine : Bless you.

I (not so blessedly) : He's never seen you. He wants to have a look at you.

Madeleine : When ?

I : Now. This evening.

Madeleine : That's impossible. You know I'm in the new play to-night at the Arts Theatre. I've got heaps to do.

I (who have known it) : Yes, but just to meet him and have a cocktail. It won't take two minutes. He's going abroad the day after to-morrow. (*Which is quite true.*)

Madeleine : I'm not nearly ready for to-night. Are you sure to-morrow won't—

I : He said to-night. His only chance.

Madeleine : What time is it now ?

I : Six o'clock.

The slightest of pauses while MADELEINE faces up to life.

Madeleine : Where have we to meet him ?

I : At his place in Piccadilly. Can you meet me first at the Ritz ?

Madeleine : All right. In ten minutes. But I look awful.

She is at the Ritz within ten minutes—fresh, cool, lovely. I look at her, a little amused. She knows that I am thinking of the ambition in her that can make her do this for a future play on the evening she is opening in the present play, but she only screws up her nose at me, which she can do expertly. Like two children we dash off hand in hand to meet the man who has money enough to back a play.

* * * * *

The second scene follows immediately on the first. We are standing together in a huge room hung with tapestries. Almost priceless first editions lie on the tables. The eye is assaulted at every turn by evidences of fantastic wealth. There is none of the quietness of good taste; only the over-abundance of ignorance. MADELEINE looks about her. I look about me. Our eyes meet and we burst into quiet laughter.

Madeleine (*softly*) : Gord!

I (*casually*) : Just one of my friends.

The BUTLER reappears and tells us that MR. X. is detained for a minute or two. Would we like a glass of champagne, or sherry, or what? We refuse the drinks and are again left together.

Madeleine (*looking about her*) : It's a bit too too, isn't it? Tell me about this man.

I : I can't. I never heard of him till yesterday. Some one had sent him the play. He was interested enough apparently to want to do something about it. I met him. You'll now meet him. And in a few months' time the play'll be such a success that you'll be living in a house like this. God willing.

Madeleine (*fervently*) : God forbid.

Presently our host appears. He is well dressed, of medium height, a pleasantly-spoken, rather nice-eyed fellow. Good at handling people in his own way, I should say, and I watch to see what effect MADELEINE will have on him.

He offers MADELEINE a cigarette. We talk lightly about the usual things, and between these two I can

read just nothing. Then I mention that MADELEINE is opening in a new play that evening, and that as time is rather short perhaps we'd better . . . and so on. MR. X. is very interested in the Arts play, asks MADELEINE about it, discusses it with intelligence. Finally he comes to the point.

Mr. X. : You've read this other play, of course ?

Madeleine : Yes.

Mr. X. : You like it ?

Madeleine : Terribly

Mr. X. : I don't know very much about these things myself, but it seems to me like an interesting play.

Madeleine : It's awfully human.

Mr. X. : And you would like to play the part of— what's the name of the woman ?

I : Fay.

Madeleine : Very much.

Mr. X. : Do you think it'll be a success ?

MADELEINE and I stare back at him. Who can tell, our eyes say, what will be a success in this mad game ?

Mr. X. : A gamble, eh ?

Madeleine : Everything on the stage is a gamble. The most doubtful things are sometimes the winners ; the most hopeful the awful flops. A lot of experienced people seem to believe in this play. Robert Loraine has taken an option on it.

Mr. X. (tranquilly) : Well, I rather feel like a gamble with something like this. I've just pulled off something good in another direction, and I'd like to have a smack at the stage.

He continues talking, but I do not hear. I am trying to discover from his eyes, from his manner, just what he thinks of MADELEINE for the part. He has not said anything that will give us a clue. I try to read MADELEINE also, but it is hopeless.

Madeleine (eventually) : I really must go now. I've got a lot to do before eight o'clock.

Mr. X. : It's too bad we've got so little time. I'm going abroad the day after to-morrow. (To Madeleine) : Perhaps you could lunch with me to-morrow ?

" Hurrah ! " I say to myself. Clinched !

Madeleine : Thank you. That'd be lovely.

Mr. X. : We can talk things over then. Do you like the Ivy Restaurant ?

MADELEINE likes the Ivy, and the engagement is made. We shake hands with MR. X. and go down to the front door.

I (beckoning to a taxi) : Well, what do you think of him ? Pretty hopeful beggar, don't you think ?

Madeleine : Mmmmmmm.

* * * * *

The third scene is not so much part of a play as a movie. MADELEINE, with a first performance of a new play looming ahead of her within the hour, remembers that she needs a certain sort of nightdress or dressing-gown or something for one of the scenes. She stops the taxi in Regent Street at Lafayettes to buy it, implores me to telephone Antoine to say that she is on her way to have her hair dressed (will

they please remain open for her ?) and dashes into the shop.

The taxi goes on ticking. I telephone. MADELEINE secures what she wants. We throw ourselves into the taxi again, bound for Antoine's, MADELEINE suddenly remembering on the way something else she should have done or has yet to do for that evening's show. She drops me in Piccadilly Circus so that I can do some further necessary telephoning. She smiles at me as the taxi whirls her off to her hairdresser, an anxious little smile that shows her thoughts are elsewhere.

I stand, a little dazed, looking after her. I remember that she is playing in some one else's play this evening and that much depends upon her for that play's success. She should go on to the stage cool, sure of herself, prepared for the ordeal. She has spent the last hectic hour with me dashing about London. I feel that the author of the play might not like me if he knew about it. I feel that my contribution to the drama this day has not been all that the drama would desire. As I go into the telephone box, I think again of that anxious little smile on MADELEINE'S face.

ACT III

About ten days later. MADELEINE is at the other side of the table. I am reaching for the matches when a waiter forestalls me. When the waiter has gone I broach the subject that has lain silent between us like a dead past.

I (casually, as one might say that Dolomite had a

slight chance for the Derby) : Oh, by the way, what do you think has become of that fellow ?

Madeleine (who knows the fellow I mean) : Who ?

I : That Mr. X. You know : the one who was so eager to lose his money on our play.

Madeleine (casually) : Oh, I had lunch with him last week.

I : And——?

Madeleine (not very helpfully) : A very nice lunch.

She proceeds to tell me all about the food they ate and what the women at the Ivy were wearing. I wait patiently, searching her face.

I : You got on well with him ?

Madeleine : Quite well.

I : He seemed pretty keen about the play. Funny he should have dropped out like this.

Madeleine : Yes. Isn't it ?

I : Damned funny. You'd think we would have heard more from him.

Madeleine : I've heard.

I (eagerly) : Tell me the good news.

There is a moment's silence. MADELEINE'S eyes rest on me for a fleeting second, very blue and very clear. Then she shakes her head slowly and turns away to look round the room.

Madeleine (quietly) : I like this place. It's got so much atmosphere. It's restful. I'm glad we came here. (And in the same casual voice) : You knew he was going abroad ? He wrote me from Paris. Said he was still keen on the play. Wanted me to go over there for the week-end to talk it all over with him.

EPILOGUE

Two years later. The grill-room of the Savoy. Lunch time. MANETTA has just brought a beautiful bunch of violets to our table and presented them to MADELEINE. She turns to the man at her side, who is PHILIP ASTLEY, her husband.

Madeleine : Philip, aren't they lovely ?

PHILIP leans forward and smells the fragrance of the flowers. He murmurs something and MADELEINE smiles at me.

Madeleine : Isn't Philip silly ?

I : You're both idiots. Do you know I'm quite aware that you've been holding hands under the table for the last ten minutes ? In the Savoy grill !

Madeleine : Ah, that's the puritan coming out in you at last !

Philip (to Madeleine) : But of course it's wrong, darling, to hold hands under the table.

I : Of course it is.

Madeleine : Of course it is. Let's hold them above the table.

They do. Openly, unashamed, with the cynical eyes of the sophisticated world looking on, they clasp hands on the white tablecloth and smile at me defiantly.

Photograph by
CLAUDE
HARRIS



LADY CORY

LADY CORY

THE little shoes that Queen Victoria wore at her Coronation lie in a box in a house in Belgrave Square. They are carefully wrapped in tissue paper, and when you are privileged to see them you feel that you are peeping into the past only because you are a very favoured person. You take the shoe in your hand, and if you are the kind of individual that I am at such moments, you are drawn away from this sad year of grace. Your thoughts go tumbling down the years. All that you have read of Victorianism, all that you have heard, the little things you remember, paint a picture of an England growing into greatness, of a puberty land feeling the stirrings of its manhood, of a people reared in an atmosphere of stuffy convention, timid culture, aggressive prosperity, and almost unbelievable security.

You finger the shoe gently. It was worn by the girl who became the Queen of that incredible country of the past. It was slipped on to her foot on a misty summer morning in 1837 (if there ever was such a year) and fifty years after it was discarded its wearer was watching her people gather the fine fresh fruits of her reign, watching them accumulate the gigantic treasures of industrial success which later their sons and grandsons flung irrevocably to the winds in the brief years between 1914 and 1920. It is a fragile bit of work, this shoe. Its sole is of the thinnest leather and its purple velvet is embroidered with gold, and in the white lining there is a greeting in black silk—All Hail to Victoria. A fragile shoe, but it carried its first owner to the throne.

It lies now, in a generation that has no memory and little reverence for Victoria and things Victorian, in this house in Belgrave Square. It is partnered by one of the stockings that Queen Victoria wore on the same momentous occasion, a white silk stocking with gold embroidery. The other stocking is missing. I wonder what became of it. Here are the two shoes, here the one stocking. Where is the other?

But here also is a room that is full of the past in a house that breathes of the past, owned by a woman who is both of the past and the present. A very old grandfather clock tick-tocks, tick-tocks into the silence. Every tick of it is lengthening the span between myself and that other age; every tock is drawing away To-day from Yesterday. I need this fragile shoe in my hand to bridge the distance and establish contact; the woman beside me needs no such remembrancer.

Lady Cory says :

"And here is a pair of gloves she wore in 1846. Aren't they lovely?"

They are indeed lovely. Plain white kid. Once worn by Victoria, Queen of England. What are they doing here? And as I put down the shoe to take up the gloves I reflect that they could be in no better custody than Lady Cory's, in no happier house than this, which is a veritable temple to Victoria and a museum of Victorian relics. They could be in no safer hands than this woman's whose adoration for Victoria and the Victorian tradition fills such a large part of her life.

The atmosphere of the past is in every inch of this house. In this small room very little can be seen of the walls. They are covered by pictures. Pictures of Victoria. Pictures of Victoria as a child, Victoria playing with her children and Prince Albert, Victoria

in the ballroom, Victoria serious, Victoria smiling, Victoria very plain, and Victoria surprisingly beautiful. There are twelve pictures by Nash of Victoria at Windsor—a very grand, upstage Windsor it was, too. You cannot escape Victoria here, but you do not want to escape Victoria at all if you come to Lady Cory at her house in Belgrave Square.

In this same room there are nineteen chairs, most of them flowered in cross-stitch. Lady Cory is showing them to me again with pride, and I say thoughtfully :

“ What a difference they are from all the modern chromium-plated stuff.”

She wheels round on me. Her blue eyes, shrewd and kindly in her healthy, high-boned face, show their surprise.

“ Chromium-plated stuff ? ”

“ Yes—the modern tubular furniture and that sort of thing. The steel chairs and the glass tables. You know.”

She does not know. I don’t believe she wants to know, but I tell her about some of the houses I have visited and about the very modern designs and mediums for furniture. She listens with interest.

“ How amazing,” she says. “ Who uses that kind of furniture ? ”

“ Oh, lots of people nowadays. Smart people, mostly.”

She murmurs again : “ How amazing ! ” with a soft wonder in her voice, and promptly forgets all about the subject. She has no condemnation for people who prefer chromium-plated chairs to flowered cross-stitch. She has only a tolerant surprise.

There is another article in this room for which I have an affection, a very old-fashioned piano with red silk pleating and narrow flanking mirrors. I thread my way between the chairs and the table, past the

very old-fashioned bird-cage which rises from a stand on the floor but which has no bird because Lady Cory has for years been associated with societies preventing cruelty to animals, and would not dream of caging a bird. I finger the yellow keys of the piano.

We discuss music and musicians. Lady Cory is passionately fond of music. She is an eager and accomplished pianist and is, in fact, the only amateur pianist who has ever been asked to play with the Queen's Hall Orchestra. Paderewski has played to her in this house, and Kreisler has drawn from his violin the wild gipsy music that Lady Cory loves. She does not care for rigid classical music which is technically perfect but emotionless. She likes the melody that appeals to the emotions. She touches the yellowed keys now and the sound is strange in this room. The fifty Victorias on the wall look down indulgently at the brown-haired woman at the piano.

She puts down the lid and the room is given over again to the tick-tocking of the clock. I know no sound that conjures up such fancy and such dread as the solemn ticking of a grandfather clock in a silent room. It worries me, and I would have all clocks silent, but I know that it does not worry Lady Cory. I question whether she hears it.

We leave the small room and walk out into the long wide hall. It is brightly lighted on this spring evening. The stairway runs straight up the side of the right-hand wall to the floor above, and this wall, too, like most of the walls of this house, is covered with framed pictures. There are several beautiful life-size pictures in needlework done by Lady Cory herself when she had more leisure than she enjoys now. Some of these are in floral design, but the most effective are the copies of Burne-Jones and other famous artists' pictures.

The work required an extraordinary amount of care and application. Each eye in the figures in the pictures has eight different shades of wool, and each picture took over a year to complete.

"The great difficulty, of course," says Lady Cory at my side, "is to get movement and expression in such a medium."

We move slowly about the lofty hall. It is full of Victorian and Georgian pictures. There are pictures in cross-stitch, pictures in long-stitch, pictures in felt and silk and turkey-work. There are rag pictures, and hair pictures, and pictures made with sand. Many of the processes that have gone to make this amazing collection are not now worked; a few of them are secret methods that we know nothing of to-day.

"But where," I asked again, as I have asked before, "did you pick them all up?"

"Oh, I potter about a great deal," she replies casually, drawing my attention to several baskets of wax fruit under glass cases.

There cannot be another collection like this in the whole of London. It is doubtful if there is such another complete collection anywhere. There certainly is not such another woman. If you expect her conversation, in this shrine to Victoria, to be only of Victoria, you do not know Lady Cory.

On this day when I have called on her, for instance, and after we have gone over the lovely drawing-room upstairs, in which all the chairs and divans are covered with needlework, and where the general impression is one of gold-framed pictures, lovely mirrors, and old-world magnificence, we sit and have tea in another picture-filled room on the ground floor, and Lady Cory talks finance. She discusses the world situation with more shrewdness than my own broker does, touches on

Wall Street, and as she goes swiftly over market possibilities, my mind is running over the many interests that go to make up this woman sitting in the opposite chair.

All around me are paintings and prints of that other age that is much nearer to Lady Cory than is yesterday evening. Her heart stays in the nineteenth century even if her mind is busy with the problems of to-day. I remember her devotion to music. I think of the people I know who are fond of music. They seem naturally to fall into a little set who have few other interests. But music and money ! Kreisler and Kreuger ! The woman for whom Kreisler plays in this house can discuss finance with intelligence and understanding. It is nothing to her to mention in one sentence *Caprice Viennois*, and in the other Swedish matches. And sometimes, because of the other great interest in her life—the consuming interest, really—she is called a crank. She does not mind that.

"I know they call me a crank," she says now, because the drift of our conversation has veered round inevitably to humanitarianism, and to cruelty to animals. "But what does that matter ? I don't care what people say about me or think about me. I don't think so much of other people, you know."

I do know. She elaborates now.

"I've got quite a contempt for human nature. It is very crude and base and savage when you get down to it. Progress has not done so much for people. It does not matter what class of people you think of—the people who hunt stags to torture and destroy them, or the people who peer through cages and mock the animals inside, or the crowd that cheers the circus animal which probably has been cruelly ill-treated in its training. It's terrible ! "

The blue eyes are gleaming. The high cheeks have a spot of angry colour in them. Lady Cory throws back her head in disgust. The Victorian spirit is roused.

"I don't know why people are like that. There is something so savage and un-Christian in life. You can see it so clearly in the mobs of people who go to murder trials, or visit the spot where some one has been killed, or read the endless columns of horrors about a tragedy which the newspapers publish. I despair almost of human nature. It seems always to be planning wars and butcheries. People have a morbid interest in killing, and education has done little or nothing to remove it. It's horrible, horrible."

She pauses for a moment.

"People are so wilfully cruel," she says sadly.

Lady Cory does not only talk. She spends the great part of her life in trying to stop cruelties, in endeavouring to bring some relief to people and animals subjected to cruelty. She has not hesitated on occasion to take action when a horse has been ill-treated in her sight in the street. She has willingly come forward as a police witness at such times.

At her feet as she talks to me is a little ailing dog. He is carefully shielded from the window side of the room by a screen, and the warmth of the fire stirs him comfortingly as he huddles on his bed. Lady Cory bends down to stroke him. She strokes him absently, affectionately.

"Did you listen to the wireless debate the other evening?" I asked her. "There was a discussion on blood sports."

"I haven't a wireless set."

My mind registers : Of course she hasn't a wireless set. Such a thing would be out of place in this house. And then I remember that she has a telephone in

almost every room in the house, and I wonder again at her queer mixture of modernism and Victorianism. She goes on : " But I heard about it. And I am so glad that the man speaking against blood sports scored so many points against the other person."

I mention the " bleeding " of young children at hunt meets—the touching of their young faces with the killed fox. Lady Cory throws up her hands in disgust.

" Can you imagine anything more barbaric ? " she demands. " Can you tell me what kind of people these are who let their children be ' bleded ' in this terrible way ? It is simply appalling."

The Victorian background of this house is beginning to fade in the urgency of our present-day conversation. The talk turns to war, and just for a moment I remember that when all these pictures on the wall were painted war was a vastly different affair from what it is to-day. It was actually a weapon of Victorian imperialism. That puberty country stirring into manhood had its quota of wars—punitive wars, jingo wars, mutiny wars, wars fought more or less gaily to the jingles of Mr. Kipling. They were almost all necessary to its growth and to its greatness. They were fought in the reign of that good Queen whose Coronation shoes lie wrapped in tissue paper in this house. As gallant a show of little wars as one can imagine for one monarch. It took a big war, involving a normally civilian population, to bring home to that same civilian population the cruelty and wickedness of slaughter.

" All this talk of war," deplores Lady Cory, and breaks off to ask whether I think there will be another war.

I say yes, of course I do.

" How terrible ! " And then, with calm acceptance :

"I suppose it is the case that London or any large city can be wiped out by aeroplanes?" And before I can answer. "No wonder I have a contempt for human nature! Imagine in this year of 1933, with all we know, and with all the resources of civilisation at our command, talking about even the possibility of another big war! Poor human nature! How can we expect it to be kind to animals when it cannot be kind to itself?"

I offer to send her a chapter from the book, *What Would be the Character of a New War?* describing the bacteriological side of the next conflict in which combatants and non-combatants alike will have diseases pumped into them. Lady Cory waves my offer away, saying she does not want to read of horrors. She is not one of the morbidly-minded people who feast on the macabre. But she is anxious to hear about war from me. She knows that I happened to be at the front when I was eighteen, and she is fearful of its effects on me.

"The war must have left terrible marks on boys of that age," she believes. "They will never recover from it."

I assure her that in my own case—admittedly a very lucky one—the very opposite happened. I tell her that actually my youth saved me from war's effects, and that the bad side of it practically passed over my head.

"I'd be much more affected by a war to-day," I tell her, "than I was then. To-day my matured imagination and sensitiveness would play hell with me. Then my callow youthfulness was my greatest protection—mentally."

And of course that is so. But it is a peg for this discussion on the brutality of humanity, and we tackle

it in this quiet room, with the ailing dog on the floor paying not the slightest attention to us. I watch her as she talks. There is something faintly Irish in the high cheek-bones, in the healthy colour of the face, in the blue eyes. Her mouth is fine and expressive. Her face is the face of a very fair lady. Against the purple of her dress, and in this room of memories and reminders, her face has an aristocratic sensitiveness that is the very expression of herself.

This woman stands for something. It may be, in this hurrying democracy, something that many people consider worthless. It may be something for which the world has no longer any use. That does not matter. It is here in Lady Cory, and it is here in this house of hers that has always belonged to one family. She mentions that with pride. There is the Victorian. Proud, loyal, respecter of property and tradition. Determined to stick to her beliefs. Aware, in a crumbling world, of her own integrity. It is something.

To-night, after I leave her to catch my train, she is dining alone in this house. She is dining, not in the great cool dining-room with its lofty mirrors that have reflected so much grandeur in the past, but in the tiny room at the end of the hall. The tiny room with its nineteen chairs and its twelve pictures by Nash of Victoria at Windsor, with its empty bird-cage rising from a stand on the floor, and its hundred-year-old piano with the yellow keys.

A white cloth has been laid on the lovely table, and the knives and forks and spoons are in position now as I take my leave of her in the hall. Lady Cory is dining alone to-night. Well, not quite alone. The grandfather clock will be speaking to her during dinner in this room that shelters the shoes Victoria wore on Coronation Day.



Photograph

GLADYS CALTHROP

GLADYS CALTHORP

FIFTEEN years ago, a slim young man, still in his teens, stood leaning against the counter of a café on the Riviera, and murmured : "God, what a pain I've got in my stomach ! "

His woman companion patted his hand consolingly, and said that a drink would do him a lot of good. The slim young man shook his head sorrowfully. He knew better.

A young woman with dark hair and a small, puckish face, came through the crowd. The companion of the slim young man caught her eye, hailed her, drew her to the counter.

The slim young man looked up bleakly. Introductions, obviously.

His companion, putting her arm through the arm of the new arrival, said :

" You two know each other ? Gladys Calthrop . . . Noel Coward."

" God, what a pain I've got in my stomach ! " said Noel Coward.

Gladys Calthrop smiled sympathetically.

" Tried anything for it ? "

" There isn't anything. There couldn't be."

" Chloral, for instance ? I've heard that it's good."

The young man looked into her face. She seemed determined to do something about him.

" It might be better than death," he conceded.

" Much. Suppose we try it ? "

They went together to a chemist ; the chloral worked wonders ; Noel Coward's stomach ache disappeared ;

they spent the evening in happy celebration ; and thus began a friendship and an association in the theatre that has seen the genius of both these people recognised and rewarded.

Fifteen years ago, Noel Coward, aware of his own ability, was noisily impatient at the failure of other people to recognise it. The young man that Gladys Calthrop met in that Riviera café was kicking his heels against the door of a world that has since laughed with him over his *Design for Living*, and wept over his *Cavalcade* ; that has sung and whistled his melodies from *Bitter Sweet*, *Words and Music*, *Wake Up and Dream* ; that has listened appreciatively—or embarrassedly—to his biting home truths in *Private Lives* and *Fallen Angels*.

But the world hadn't much use for him fifteen years ago. It saw him as a rather tiresome and strident youth with protruding ears and a bitter smile, who had acted in a few plays in the West End and the provinces, and who had altogether too much to say about himself. Clever, of course, and strangely charming, but too aggressively young. Too exhausting.

Noel Coward has got his own back on the world—as he always knew he would—a long time since. His genius has entertained and provoked it, his gaiety and wit have startled it, his frankness has often pained it. The world, if it has not exactly become a better place since his recognition, has at least grown into a brighter one.

There was brightness in Coward fifteen years ago when his friendship with Gladys Calthrop began, but there was grimness also. It was the grimness of a man who knew he could do all that he has since done, but who was being “kept in his place.” He could not get going. The amazing industry that has marked his

later life was very much in evidence in those early days, but young Coward was forced to spend much of his time and energy in meeting people who might help to arrange for the production of the plays he was writing. Untiring in his efforts, unwavering in his belief in himself, he battered himself against many rebuffs and disappointments.

People were amused by him, or interested in him, or just frankly irritated with him. "One of the most definite personalities of our time," Gladys Calthrop says of him now, and it might have been said of him then. He knew, he knew, he knew. He knew what he could do, and he knew what he wanted, and he knew that he would ultimately achieve. On the stage at ten years of age, he very early fixed a goal for himself, and worked his way tenaciously toward it. It bewildered him when he encountered people who tried to stop his inevitable progress by their blindness or stupidity. Quite a few people bewildered him.

Gladys Calthrop has shared in Noel Coward's success. Modest to the extent that when she designed the scenery for Coward's *The Vortex*, she asked that only her initials and not her name should appear on the programme, it is understandable that she is a figure of mystery to the public at large, and that outside London and New York and the great family of the theatre, she is almost unknown.

She has done the *décor* for more successful plays than any other woman, and many a time when you have sat in your seat in the stalls or the dress circle or the pit and admired the colour and design and intelligence of the setting and clothes on the stage—as you must have done the black-and-white bedroom with the huge four-poster in *Words and Music*, and the mountain shrine scene in *Autumn Crocus*, and Fay Compton's

clothes in Julian Wylie's pantomime, *Dick Whittington*—you have been admiring the work of this small, dark-haired woman with the puckish face.

In a way she owes her success—or rather her chance—almost to her own forgetfulness. A long time ago, returning from a holiday, she suddenly realised that she had forgotten to buy Ivor Novello a birthday present. It was impossible that Ivor Novello should go without a birthday present, so she took down from her wall one of her own paintings which she specially liked, parcelled it up, and packed it off to him.

The picture attracted the attention of Ivor's friends, particularly that of Ben Rimo, then working hard on stage settings. Ben Rimo suggested that the artist might turn her attention to the stage. She had colour sense, feeling for design, imagination. Could Ivor get her to bring along some more work so that Rimo might gauge her possibilities? Ivor could.

So Gladys Calthrop, earning at that time about thirty shillings a week by her work, gathered around her every imaginable kind of drawing and painting in her studio, tucked the canvases under both arms, staggered on to a London General bus to the amusement of the passengers and the dismay of the conductor, and arrived at her destination and her destiny.

Ben Rimo studied the paintings for some time.

"Would you like to do work for the theatre?" he asked.

"I'd love to," Gladys Calthorp said, "but I've never even thought of it before. Do you think I could?"

"I'm sure you could. When can you start?"

Without hesitation: "Now!"

"All right. Start now! Get your coat off!"

That was the beginning of her work for the theatre.

And while she was fitting herself and apprenticing herself to the new vehicle, Noel Coward was wearing out the thin soles of his shoes trying to find a producer for a play he had written called *The Vortex*. His daily excursions were adventures in disillusionment. Nobody wanted to put on *The Vortex*, and certainly nobody even wanted to look at the damned thing when they knew that Coward insisted on acting in it. That was asking too much !

But Coward went on working, and Gladys Calthrop went on working. They met often to compare notes, to talk work, to forget for a while the everyday struggles, to laugh (on Coward's part a little bitterly) at the fatuities of their fellow men. They were soon to meet on a common working adventure that changed both their lives.

Noel Coward's star ultimately led him to Michael Arlen. The influential men with money had turned him down ; the producers had been "out" when he called ; the knowing ones had given him their advice and nothing else. To a fellow artist he finally appealed for help to put on *The Vortex*. And the fellow artist did the necessary.

"Well, I happen to be on top at the moment," said Michael Arlen, "and it's up to us writers to help each other. I've just made a bit of money, so of course I can do something about your play."

He reached for his cheque-book.

"But you haven't read the manuscript," Coward protested.

"What of it ? "

"You don't know if it's good."

"I'm sure it's good."

"And I'm going to play in it," Coward reminded him grimly, awaiting the usual come-back.

"Fine," said Arlen. "I hope it's a big success."

And with that—incredible but true story—he signed his name to a cheque for £250, tore it out of the book, handed it, still smiling, to Noel Coward, and so contributed his bit to theatrical and social history.

The Vortex was put on first at the old Everyman Theatre in Hampstead. Everything in connection with the play was done at the theatre—even the painting of the scenery. Gladys Calthrop did that. The theatre was so small that most of the time she was doing her work out in the street

The hammering and rehearsals went on gaily in the theatre; the painting went on gaily in the street. *The Vortex* was a great and immediate success.

* * * * *

"And after that," says Gladys Calthrop, "nothing frightened me. When Basil Dean wanted the play for the West End, he wanted the same kind of settings as at the Everyman, and asked me to call and see him. He didn't know who I was. I had put my initials only on the programme. When I walked into his office he exclaimed: 'My God, it's a woman!'"

And an oddly provocative woman. She sits curled up in a corner of the sofa opposite me. Beside her a grey cat lies curled up in a deep arm-chair. The cat is asleep, but Gladys Calthrop is brightly awake, her narrowed, greeny-grey eyes looking across at me as she talks. They are mocking eyes, and rather wicked. They suggest that Gladys Calthrop gets a lot of fun out of things that aren't intended to be funny. They tell no lies in that respect.

Her short, crisp black hair is brushed straight back from the small face, and a slash of red sardonic mouth twists upwards at the corners as she smiles. She lifts a cigarette to this mouth now, and her nails flash

violently red as she does so. Her hands are not usually painted. She is too much the worker and the artist for that. But to-morrow night is the first night of a show for which she has done the *décor*, and to-day she seized a moment between rehearsals to have her nails painted for that.

We are sitting in her studio in Westminster. It is a large lofty studio, and might well be one of her own modern settings on a stage. It has cream and white walls, overhead lighting, a minstrels' gallery, large square slabs of parquet flooring, and a divan bed against the farthest wall. There is a red blind above the bed —the only note of harsh colour in the place. There is a grand piano, beautiful modern chairs and sofas and tables, and shelves of books against the wall facing the fireplace. Lots of books. All Noel Coward's plays. Ernest Dowson's poetry. Modern novels, French, American, English. Biographies.

The studio is completely modern in the sense that it can house at the same moment Paul Nash pictures and a grandfather clock with a coloured design of Edinburgh High Street on the front ; that it can boast an African mask and Victorian needlework under a glass cover ; that it has lamps designed by Gladys Calthrop and old-fashioned stone-ware barrels for brandy and peppermint.

It is spacious and light and airy. Very light and sunny on this morning when I have dropped in on her an hour before lunch.

She tells me of a change she is going to make.

"I'm going to put a bar in that corner—sometime," she says.

She indicates a corner beneath the minstrels' gallery.

"Doesn't seem right in here, somehow," I say.

"Why not? Drink's got its place in life."

"But it'll spoil the effect of this place"

"I think that's sometimes a good thing . . . to build up an effect and ruin it with something altogether out of tune."

"But that's a destructive instinct," I protest.
"You're not destructive."

"Of course I am. Destruction's a good thing. It makes more space in the world. All artists must by instinct be destructive, I think. There's not enough room now for beauty to grow."

She puts down her cigarette.

"Have an apple?" she offers, reaching out her hand to a plate of fruit.

We munch apples. My eye catches sight of a model theatre up in the gallery.

"I've never used it," Gladys Calthrop confesses. "Some one gave it to me, and I've always meant to work out my designs and experiments on it, but it just hasn't happened yet. One day I'll use it." She comes back to destruction. "Far too many people in the world. Far too many conventional people like jellyfish. Just shapeless messes. The kind of people who laugh at the wrong places in theatres, and appreciate the wrong thing, and say 'How sweet!' when the curtain goes up showing sickly scenery like a picture postcard. Of course I'm destructive."

She says it crisply out of the slashed red mouth, which is scarred where once a dog bit her, and through the half-closed eyelids I see a flash of green. Her face seems to be laughing. Little anarchist, I think, but I know that she votes Conservative.

Little anarchist always. Gladys Calthrop grew up conventionally in a conventional Cornish family. The last thing that her parents wanted her to have anything to do with was the stage. She lived the life of

the ordinary upper-class girl, did all the usual things, went all the usual places. At the right time of the year she was taken to Scotland for fishing and shooting. The south of France knew her as it knew the hordes of other English visitors who run their lives according to the calendar.

She might have grown into one of these strange women who sit on shooting sticks at races. You might have seen her in the illustrated weeklies tramping over the moors in good Scotch tweeds, or waiting at the famous second tee at North Berwick ; she might even have avoided press photographers and lived out her life in glorious conventional obscurity.

But she had to live her life in her own way, and although that way led her to hard work and considerable effort, it was the only thing for a woman with her temperament. The conventional life went by the board. She painted.

She follows her thought about destruction.

"Lack of a sense of possession is about the same thing," she says thoughtfully. "And how many real people do you know who want possessions? *Who* wants to be cluttered up with possessions? Do you?"

I tell her that my idea of living is to be able to go off at a moment's notice, without a thought of anything, to the farthest end of the world . . . to be so untrammelled by possessions that there are scarcely any reactions to my actions. I tell her also that of course I can't do that, as so many other people can't, but it is my idea, and that it is an idea which needs the possession of money principally for its execution. She tells me that she wants to do the same sort of thing; that the one possession she does not part with—when it comes to a question of parting with

possessions—is a motor car, because it is the one possession that can take her away.

But the same motor car, taking her away, leads her into still further possessions. One day, motoring in Kent, she saw an old mill, and fell instantly in love with it. What would have happened if the mill had been tenanted, she does not say. Probably she would have bought out the tenants, lock, stock and wireless set. She is so successful that she could do that. But luckily the mill was untenanted and for sale. Gladys Calthrop, instinct for possession or not, had to possess that mill.

With eighteen shillings and sixpence in her pocket and an artist's belief that *any* sum of money planked down on an estate agent's counter constituted a deposit and an agreement, she sought out the agent and broke the sad news to him that he was about to earn his commission. The eighteen shillings and sixpence—plus her substantial offer for the mill—did the trick, and now she owns this place with its delightful garden and mill stream.

She goes down to it when she wants to get away from work.

"To-morrow night when the show is over," she says, "I'm off to forget all about it in my cottage. It's odd seeing the first night of a play. The lights never come up as they should and the reaction of the audience is sometimes very surprising. A palpitating business, altogether. I prefer the actual work, the building up."

She builds up her garden in the same way as she does her stage sets, watches it grow, tends it exclusively herself. Her gardener is reserved for the kitchen part of the garden only. Every flower in the place has been planted by her, every border is her own preserve.

"I won't let him touch my flowers!"

"And you have no sense of possession!" I jeer.

She is not to be put out. She laughs at me out of her narrowed greeny-grey eyes, puts the core of her apple in the ash-tray, picks up a cigarette.

The telephone rings, and she uncoils her slender legs from the sofa and walks with firm steps and almost masculine assurance to the instrument by the bed in the far wall. Her small black head rises confidently from her square, straight shoulders. She is extraordinarily neat and compact in her movements and gestures.

When she returns she says:

"Some one just back from America." The slow, sardonic smile. "You know—full of that wonderful American enthusiasm and energy."

"It gets us all."

"Us all. And it lasts for just three weeks after we come back. We get all tuned up while we're there and we feel that nothing can stop us doing anything. It's the American air, and the people, and their enthusiasm for life. They've got *m-m-m* in them," she clenches her fist to show what she means, and makes the *m-m-m* sound through her tightly closed red mouth—"and we get it from them while we're there. When we land in London we still believe we can do all the things we want to do, and everything English seems unnecessarily slow and dilatory. We burn with impatience. We really believe we can change people to our way of thinking, and then gradually the zip in us evaporates. The English atmosphere is too much for it. It never really has a chance. It dies."

"And we become just like everybody else. We don't know it's gone out of us."

She nods her head in agreement and says: "Except

when we meet some one else just returned from America, and we see the something in them and remember we once had it ourselves."

And so, talking of America, we talk of Noel Coward, whose *Design for Living* has drawn large and amused audiences to the New York theatre where it is playing. Gladys Calthrop did the beautiful *décor* for *Design for Living*, a play which is in effect a plea for the personal freedom of the three principal characters—two men and a woman—who find their completest happiness in living together. It is the wittiest and most entertaining play that Noel Coward has written, but it is doubtful whether British audiences will ever be permitted to listen to its wit or its brilliance.

I remind her that the first time I saw her was at a first performance of a Coward show in Manchester. I was sitting in the lounge of the Midland Hotel when she passed through with a few other members of the company. I have seen her at other times in Manchester before I met her, nearly always when she was there for a Coward play.

She laughs.

"One dear old lady calls me Noel's evil genius," she says. "Why evil, or genius, heaven only knows."

Another cigarette. She squirms herself into an even smaller coil in the corner of the sofa. The mischief goes out of her expression. She becomes very serious.

"Noel is one of the most definite personalities I have ever known. He must be one of the most definite personalities of our time. He was on the stage at ten because his people had very little money, and always—right from the beginning—he meant to do as he has done. It was awful to him in the early days that people did not take him at his own valuation, and he kicked over the traces and was a bit tiresome. But

that was only because he could see what the others couldn't see. He's made them see it now. He's always had to face up to life and fight it, and it's given him a terrific sense of values and direction. He knows where he wants to go, and he goes.

"I've learned all kinds of things from him—his way of handling people, for one. It is marvellous to see Noel at a rehearsal. He can conserve his energy and his temper in an extraordinary way. He seems to hide that part of him that can be impatient and energetic far away from the surface. On the surface he is quietly amiable, putting up with people's stupidities, holding himself well in hand. Quietly and efficiently he gets them to believe they're doing what *they* want to do, which is really what *he* wants them to do, but sometimes when they're obstinate the force of his driving energy comes out and he gets his way by sheer pressure of personality.

"I've learned from him not to waste my energies in the wrong ways."

Gladys Calthrop rises and walks across the room. I follow her to a glass frame shielding a piece of needlework.

Almost regretfully: "There was something about that Victorian age"—looking down on the needle-work—"people did things just for the sake of doing them—cushions, needlework, bitty things. There was no need to do them, but women sat around doing lovely, useless work. It must have been rather fun. Nowadays, well, can you imagine anybody doing this nowadays?"

Not too many people. We look at the Victorian relic for a pensive moment. Then the mocking twist takes possession of her mouth.

"When they can be doing crosswords?" she asks smilingly.

The door bell rings. Gladys Calthrop is going out to lunch with a woman friend. I remember my own engagement and pick up my hat.

I take a parting look at this spacious, lofty, *super* studio, with its parquet flooring and grand piano and cream and white walls. A parting look at the diminutive, determined, puckish woman, drawing on her red gloves in the centre of the floor.

"I'm flying to Germany next week," she says. "It would be fun to meet Hitler."

I jeer at her again as I go out through the door and say "Hullo" to the woman who is just coming in.

Fun to meet Hitler! She's learned a lot from Noel Coward. A lot, apparently, of his definiteness.

A week later, in my newspaper office, a press photograph was put on my desk. It was a photograph of Hitler and a few other people. The woman on Hitler's left was Gladys Calthrop.

Photograph by
HOPPE



THE COUNTESS OF OXFORD AND ASQUITH

"Do you know," I said, "that most people think of you as a hard and cold woman? Almost an emotionless woman?"

Margot covered the bottom of her glass with a film of soda water.

"As a kind of intellect," I went on. "Not so much a woman as a cool, shining intellect. As rigid as steel, and about as human as a refrigerator."

The dark eyes, set deep in the clear skin, flickered as she put down the glass.

"I don't care a damn what they think!"

I could believe that. I remembered what courage she had. I remembered that, during twenty-five years' hunting, she had broken nearly every bone in her body, broken both her collar-bones, her jaw, her ribs, her nose twice, fractured her skull, and once was on crutches for a year after knocking off her kneecap!

She looked away from me to the window. Outside the sun was shining. North Berwick, cool in the crisp autumn air, was gay with a golden morning glory. Margot was going to have it fine for her daily round of golf.

"I have never worried about public opinion. My husband was the same." She brought her eyes back to me. "We both felt that if we had enough personal friends who knew and understood us, that was all that mattered."

I put down my own drink.

"The first time I met you," I said, "I was prepared

for all sorts of terrible things. My friends had warned me. They knew all about you. You were the Last Word. They were very sorry for me that I had to meet you at all. And people who had not met you said they disliked your photograph."

Her tight, squaw-like face cracked for a flashing moment into a smile.

" You seem to have conquered the idea."

And so in this pleasant house of hers in North Berwick we fell to talking about seven years before, and our first meeting in London.

She had asked me to call on her at her house in Bedford Square. That in itself was a surprise, for I had approached her by letter asking her to do what I really feared in my heart she would not do. I had just taken over the editorship of a popular newspaper, and in the manner of young audacious editors of popular newspapers, I invited a number of very distinguished and well-known people to lay bare the secrets of their lives and to tell my readers What Love had Meant to Them.

What flutterings must have agitated the bosoms of many worthy people on receipt of that cool request I can only appreciate now from the accumulated experience of my maturity. But youth has its own kind of courage. My faith could easily envisage a Margot Asquith sitting with flushed face and trembling hand in the secrecy of her boudoir, penning without restraint the moments of heaped-up loveliness that had come to her from her most beautiful, her most intimate, her most personal human relationship.

When she wrote asking me to call on her, I put her name at the top of my list of people who had already agreed to contribute to the series of articles and felt that the job was as good as done. She was going to

do it ! What other reason could there be for her invitation ? What other reason, I ask myself now, than to gaze with her alive curiosity on the man who could ask her for such a confession.

She came into the room at Bedford Square as she always comes into a room—apparently preoccupied with many other affairs, absentmindedly giving me her hand and a quick, sharp scrutiny. She walked away from me, still deep in her thoughts. Her movements were abrupt, impulsive. She has the jerky fluttering of a bird. Quite like a bird in her movements, but with a face that I wanted at once to see enshrined in Red Indian feathers. Here was the flint-like mask that had looked at me before out of a thousand Wild West dreams of my boyhood.

I thought of her, in that first moment, as a Red Indian Chief. She was essentially a leader, with her lean, hard, patrician face. She was the person to order, not to be ordered.

She turned from her quick movements about the room and looked at me.

"What are you thinking of?" she demanded.

I told her.

"Very amusing," she said, without an expression in her eyes or her face.

I smiled.

"Of course I can't write the article you want," she said abruptly.

"Of course you can," I laughed.

Her eyes hardened. We gazed at each other for a few moments in silence. I was beginning to like this woman. And quite suddenly she relaxed, the forbidding exterior fell away, and she was a friendly human being.

Her voice, like her movements, is abrupt. It is
G.W. F

even stern. There is everything about Lady Oxford that suggests the efficient Englishwoman who thinks she can run the world. The type you see everywhere—ordering railway porters about, getting careless waiters dismissed, complaining at hotel desks about the inefficiency of a chambermaid. The kind of sternly proficient woman that only England and America can produce. The type that makes you blush for your race.

With Lady Oxford it is a mask. I have seen her in two of her homes. I have watched her with her servants. The martinet's mask does not deceive the people close to her. They have to deal with a woman, not a face; not a photograph in the illustrated weeklies.

On that first morning of our meeting seven years before, we talked for an hour. In those days she was a very busy woman and she had come into that room meaning to give me a few minutes. But she softened her refusal to my request in her own charming way, trying to persuade me to see the proposal through her own point of view.

"I can't write about love," she protested, and much of the hardness had gone out of her voice. There was even a trace of regret in it that I should have been so misguided as to imagine she could. "I know what you want—a sensational, vulgar article with all kinds of scandal."

I protested. I named several of the famous people who had agreed to co-operate in the series. I elaborated the idea as persuasively as I knew how. She listened, her shrewd eyes boring into me from time to time.

She softened. Hope welled up in me. But I did not know the strength of her determination.

"No," shaking her head slowly. "Not about love.

It has meant too much to me. I could not dream of writing about myself, or about my husband."

She told me a story about the editor of one of the biggest groups of newspapers in America who had come over to England especially to get her to write for his group. For days he had followed her, offering on each succeeding meeting fantastic prices for her services. Finally he had placed his open cheque-book on the table and asked her to fill in any amount she wished. She closed the book and handed it back to him without taking up the pen. She does not like Americans much. She does not like American newspapers.

"I knew what he wanted," was her comment. "He wanted me to listen at all the keyholes of my friends and to tell him all the things I hear in confidence, and to give a picture of English society that his American readers would gloat over when they read it. He was a charming man, and I suppose he thought I would be tempted by the sight of his blank cheque. But I refused."

Margot does not obstruct—she tries to build up. She suggested :

"Why don't you have a series of articles on —," she mentioned a subject but I have forgotten what it was. I know that in my mind it seemed a puny thing compared to the matter in hand.

"I might," I said bleakly.

"I would write an article for you on that."

"In the meantime . . ." I murmured, and we were back at the discussion.

She was extraordinarily patient—extraordinarily patient for a woman who had made up her mind long before she entered the room to refuse my request. She let me talk. She listened, putting in a word now

and again. She watched me, and on her face there grew up some idea that had nothing whatever to do with our discussion.

"Aren't you Scotch?" she asked, when I paused.

I agreed that I was.

"From what part of Scotland?"

"Edinburgh."

It was her own Midlothian country. Margot stood up suddenly and turned away. I rose beside her.

She turned and faced me again.

"Scotsmen are very dear to me," she said quietly.

She put her arm round my shoulder. It was the friendliest possible gesture. I cannot hope to describe the simplicity and charm of it.

"I would like to do the article for you, but I'm sorry I can't. Not on that subject. Now tell me something about your life in Edinburgh."

We stood chatting, postponing my departure. She listened gravely, her face almost expressionless. And then she talked about herself, of the time when she was a young Tennant, of the Midlothian country that she loves, and of the friends of her youth.

I thought of the people who had told me that her face was hard and cruel. I remembered that this was our first meeting.

She came back to the problem of the foolish young man who had broken into her morning's work.

She demanded suddenly :

"What church do you go to?"

I blinked.

"You ought to hear some famous preacher," she urged.

I have tried them all—Protestant, Catholic, Christian Science, Mormon. But she did not mean what *denomination* did I favour; she meant quite definitely what

particular church in London of the only possible denomination for her.

" You should go to hear Dr. Geikie Cobb ; he's a great man," she continued.

I think that the surprise of hearing Lady Oxford talking about my spiritual comfort on that rainy winter morning in that house in Bedford Square was greater than the significance of her message. At that moment I was not much interested in Dr. Geikie Cobb.

" He's really very good." She looked up anxiously into my face.

" I shall go to hear him," I promised.

She patted my arm.

" You'll like him. He's sincere and straightforward. We need a man like that in every church to-day."

She continued to talk. She was so obviously in earnest about this preacher, so eager that I should share her enthusiasm for his work. It struck me as strange that I who had come to persuade should have to listen to the persuasions of Margot. But that *is* Margot.

There was no article for me on what love meant to Lady Oxford. There never would be, apparently.

* * * * *

And yet . . . and yet . . .

Seven years later on this golden morning in North Berwick, I had come down from Edinburgh, after travelling overnight from London on a mission that resembled my earliest meeting with her, but which differed in the essential detail that on this occasion the article I wanted was written.

We sat and read it together on a sofa. It was written in pencil on foolscap paper. Lady Oxford leaned over my shoulder to help me along with her scrawl, but I

knew her writing well and ran through the pages quickly.

We discussed it with animation, while the lazy morning lay outside the door of this pleasant house, and the white gulls wheeled in the sunshine.

I thought of the rainy day seven years before and the house in Bedford Square.

"*Times have changed,*" wrote Lady Oxford in her article in my hand, and truly times had changed. *The Life of Lord Oxford* by A. J. Spender and Cyril Asquith had been published a few days before my North Berwick visit. The love letters of Herbert Henry Asquith to Margot had formed a most important part of the biography, and had created immense public interest. These letters could only have been obtained from one source—Lady Oxford herself.

When I read the book and realised this, the old dream stirred in me again. If Margot had permitted publication of these letters from her husband to herself, surely she might now reconsider the request that I had made to her years before, and write a newspaper article for me.

When I telephoned her from London, and spent twenty minutes of the early evening pleading with her, she was adamant. She would not do it, she said, and put down the telephone receiver finally on her refusal.

"*Please change your mind and do the article,*" I wired her as soon as I left the 'phone. "*And let me collect it from you in North Berwick.*"

Something told me she would write it. I booked a sleeper on the night train from King's Cross, arrived in Edinburgh to find a telegram from my office saying that Lady Oxford had capitulated, and went down later to North Berwick to meet her.

Yes, times had changed. But Lady Oxford was just

the same. Cool, abrupt, enigmatic. She appeared to be everything that Gossip had said of her. But the manuscript in my hand was so much evidence against Gossip.

When I had read her article, we wandered to the window together. Margot was going to play golf in the afternoon. She asked me to stay to lunch, but I had an appointment in Edinburgh and had only a little time with her before catching my train.

She explained why she had allowed her husband's love letters to be published in the biography.

"If the subject is to be a living man," she said, "and not a lay figure, you must allow strangers now and then to peep into his private life. No matter how brilliant a man's official career is, a biography cannot be complete without going into details of his relations with his family and his wife. And what is more revealing of a man than his love letters?"

She came out to see me off. The Rolls-Royce waited for me and I stepped in. There should have been a gentle whir from the self-starter, a last smile, a smooth, majestic departure from the Ogre. There was no such finale.

The chauffeur coaxed his self-starter, but the engine remained silent. A little more coaxing; a continued silence. The back of the chauffeur's neck became red. He coaxed again. Nothing happened.

I chuckled inside me, hoping that it was all true and not just a foolish delusion. Here was the situation exactly as it should have happened according to my capricious fancy. Here was the H.M. Bateman moment come true, the Gluyas Williams' nightmare a thing of reality. The lordly Rolls, the polite chauffeur, the empty, expectant carriage-way, the Lady at the door. And the self-starter refusing to work.

I hoped, for the sake of that situation, that the chauffeur would have to get out and crank. And he had ! The now-grinning chauffeur cranked while Margot and I, fused again in one of these rare ridiculous moments that come only to the very Worthy in life, laughed happily.

In the train I read her article again. It was published later under the title *My Lover-Husband*, and her conclusion seems to me to say all that need ever be said. I cannot, therefore, avoid quoting it.

" I never understood what people meant when they said my husband's manner embarrassed them. On the first day of our acquaintance, when I sat next to him at dinner in the House of Commons, I felt that other men were as so much waste paper in comparison with him.

" But even if I had found him formidable I instantly perceived the sweetness and depth of his rare nature. When, after much uncertainty, I received the following letter from him :

" ' It is enough to say—which I do with the deepest sincerity of unavailing conviction—that I can conceive of no future of which you are not the centre and which is not given, without a shadow of doubt or a shiver of fear, to you alone. . . . I would rather be blotted out of your thoughts and even your memory than be the means of shutting you off from the sunlight and the free air which you need, and in which alone your nature can put forth its incomparable radiance. . . . '

" I felt that I would be unworthy if I could not reciprocate so great a love."

ELINOR GLYN



Photograph
by
PAUL
TANQUERAY

ELINOR GLYN

A bright fire burnt in the grate and some palest orchid-mauve silk curtains were drawn in the lady's room when Paul entered from the terrace. And loveliest sight of all, in front of the fire, stretched at full length, was his tiger—and on him—also at full length—reclined the lady, garbed in some strange clinging garment of heavy purple crépe, its hem embroidered with gold, one white arm resting on the beast's head, her back supported by a pile of the velvet cushions, and a heap of rarely bound books at her side, while between her red lips was a rose not redder than they—an almost scarlet rose. Paul had never seen one as red before.

The whole picture was barbaric. . . .

THE woman who wrote that passage, nearly thirty years ago, in a novel called *Three Weeks*, and caused much fluttering in the breasts of young men and women of the period, faces me now.

There is no tiger skin stretched at full length in front of the fire, and the woman does not recline, but sits straight upright in her Louis XV. sofa. There is no red rose in the mouth of Elinor Glyn. The picture is anything but barbaric.

I feel that I must begin with this series of negatives, because for many years Elinor Glyn—red-haired, green-eyed Elinor Glyn—has been definitely associated in the public mind with the heroines of her novels, and Elinor Glyn has told me she resents it.

"People think that I spend a lot of my time on tigers' skins," she says impatiently. "It's so absurd, and because I sometimes write about women who

have green eyes, they say that I am writing about myself!"

And, without bitterness, because she has learned a lot about men and women since she wrote the famous book with which her name will always be connected: "They never understood the message of *Three Weeks*. Most of them saw it only as a story of sex. They missed its real, its spiritual meaning. To all prurient minds it seemed a very evil book. It was a noble book. Its message was that you cannot break either the law of God or the law of man without paying the price."

I remember my own introduction to *Three Weeks*. "A bit of hot stuff," said my boy friend, handing the book to me. "But don't tell my guv'nor I gave it to you. He doesn't know I've read it. It's real hot stuff." And an extraordinarily good bit of "hot stuff" I did indeed think it to be at the time.

It opened up a new world to my youthful imagination. For a long time afterward I expected to meet green-eyed queens or princesses at every turn, to be taken on wonderful amorous expeditions to the gay and lovely places of Europe. Alas, alas! Not too many princesses have destroyed—or built up—my young life with bouts of brain fever following on intense periods of affection.

Paul was young and unlearned in many things. He was completely enthralled and under her dominion—but he was naturally no weakling of body or mind. And this was more than he could stand.

"*You* mustn't be teased. My God! It is *you* who are maddening me!" he cried, his voice hoarse with emotion. "Do you think I am a statue, or a table, or chair—or inanimate like that tiger there? I am *not*, I tell you!" and he seized her in his arms, raining kisses upon her which, whatever they lacked in

subtlety, made up for in their passion and strength. "Some day some man will kill you, I suppose, but I shall be your lover—first!"

The lady gasped. She looked up at him in bewildered surprise, as a child might do who sets a light to a whole box of matches in play. What a naughty, naughty toy to burn so quickly for such a little strike!

But Paul's young, strong arms held her close, she could not struggle or move. Then she laughed a laugh of pure glad joy.

"Beautiful, savage Paul," she whispered. "Do you love me. Tell me that?"

"Love you!" he said. "Good God! Love you! Madly, and you know it, darling Queen."

"Then," said the lady in a voice in which all the caresses of the world seemed melted, "Then, sweet Paul, I shall teach you many things, and among them I shall teach you how—to—LIVE."

Ah, God, for my lost youth that could thrill to those lines. What disillusionment has entered my soul that I can read them now, and long only for my favourite country walk?

The woman who wrote them has worn well with the years. You would not think that this alert, red-haired Elinor Glyn is a grandmother. She sits now in her flat off Park Lane—a flat which so unromantic a person as a jockey formerly rented—and there is on her the bloom of a middle-aged, and not an old woman. Her skin is fresh and young, her voice is low and vibrant and strong, her eyes—when she opens the narrowed lids and allows you a peep at them—are clear and piercing.

But I cannot see much of her eyes. They are pin-points of green through the narrowed slits, but very mysterious and Sphinx-like and impressive. Elinor Glyn holds her head high and directs the green pin-

points at some world that I cannot see. It is the least bit disconcerting.

Even now, discussing *Three Weeks*, she is seeing not this Louis XV. room and myself in the opposite chair, but the mole-like people of a quarter of a century ago who were so blind to the truth that they misunderstood and misrepresented her book. She bears them no malice.

"Kings have kissed my hand because of that book," she says in her thrilling voice. "It has been appreciated by Australian bushmen, by bishops and Klondyke miners, by mothers of families, and priests of the church. Those who could read its message have always been my friends. Those who did not understand have consistently sneered. Their enmity and spite have never touched me. I had a great purpose in me when I wrote *Three Weeks*. Millions of people read the story, but only the discerning understood the intention of the work."

I can understand now her disregard of criticism. She is beyond criticism, beyond the praise or the envy of the mob. Her purpose is clear in her own mind. Nothing will detract her from it. She is guided by some inner light, some inner conviction that lifts her above misunderstanding.

You feel that she is hardly aware of your presence in this large room, which might have come from a royal palace of the eighteenth century. Elinor Glyn is living with her kings and her queens and her great ones of another age. From the walls they look down out of their painted canvas, out of their gilded frames—Catherine of Russia, a Polish Princess, an English lord, a dozen others.

The pictures were chosen because Elinor Glyn believes that the eighteenth century is her period, and

that she fits into this background because she is so essentially part of it. They were secured for her by Lord Duveen, the world-famous connoisseur of art. Elinor Glyn chose them. They are pictures of people whose achievements she admires. Rochester is on the wall, and Chesterfield and Marie Antoinette.

She sits like a queen among her pictures and her Louis XV. furniture, straight, upright, in touch with something that I try vainly to clasp. She seems not to be aware of me, and so I hear, with a start of surprise, her say :

" I see you now. I see the shapes all about your head. I can see so clearly. I don't know what I shall be able to tell you about yourself, and when the mists pass you must not ask me, because I do not know what I shall say to you. But I see you so clearly."

She is facing in my direction. Her eyes have almost closed. They are not even pin-points now. She appears to have gone off into a kind of trance, and her small face is strained and tense. I had not expected anything like this, and I sit in a numbed, expectant silence.

She speaks again, so rapidly and in such a low voice that I have to lean forward to catch the murmur of her words. It is as if she were speaking in another world.

" There is water all about you . . . the dark stream . . . where are you going . . . where are you going. . . . I see you. . . . I see you now . . . so difficult . . . will you cross the river . . . you may have to swim across by your own will and effort, or walk the easy plank . . . which shall it be . . . it is so difficult for you . . . a great decision lies before you . . . "

She breaks off abruptly and her eyes open.

I stare at her.

Her eyes blink.

"Don't ask me what I said. I do not know what I said. Don't ask me for a meaning. It has meaning only for you."

"But . . ." I begin.

"I see things like that," she says in her intense voice. "Only with some people. These things come to me to give a definite message of help to the individual. Suddenly I see things all about them and I am compelled to speak. I do not know what I tell them. Once at a great banquet, I looked down the table and somehow all the lives of these well-dressed people were revealed to me. I could see in a flash everything about them. I said something. I cannot say what it was. But it must have been important. Some one fainted."

I do not feel like fainting, but I am considerably impressed.

I have been in the presence of psychic people before, but mostly they were "commercial" and fake. Elinor Glyn speaks about them now when I mention them.

"I have no use for that sort of thing. They are impostors, and cruel impostors. They play on the hopes and fears of poor credulous people who have lost someone dear to them. It's a dreadful business. I never have anything to do with such things—séances and the like. But when I am in the presence of some people everything about them becomes clear. I cannot explain it. But I am compelled to tell them what I see."

I tell her something of my own experiences at séances, how on one occasion a party of doctors whom I accompanied to a séance switched on electric torches at a pre-arranged moment and discovered the "medium" wandering about the room with a white overall flung about his shoulders. On being discovered,

he pretended to collapse, but his malingering was easily discerned by the doctors. An account of the exposure was published in the *Sunday Chronicle*.

As I am speaking, Elinor Glyn again becomes concentrated on something in the air above my head. Her eyes narrow and almost close. Her head inclines to one side. I fall into silence, and Elinor Glyn says in a low voice :

" I see it again . . . the dark water . . . all about you . . . will you swim or walk the plank . . . great trouble . . . great decision . . . all about you. . . . I see you . . . now it is clearing . . . now it is clear . . . you will get to the other side."

I am glad of that As she opens her eyes a certain tension goes out of the room. It is as if Elinor Glyn herself is relieved that she has delivered the message she was compelled to give me. She relaxes, but that does not mean that she is less straight and upright on her sofa. She holds herself like a young athlete.

She treats herself like a young athlete. She does not drink or smoke, she dances for exercise, she walks in the park for fresh air. She lives a rigorous, hard-working life. There is nothing exotic about this woman. But there is certainly mystery.

" I get many of my stories in a flash like that," she says, " just as I get impressions of people. As *they* are revealed to me, so in some uncanny way are my stories. I remember the afternoon Lowenstein the millionaire threw himself from an aeroplane. I was in New York at the time and just going into my hotel

" The newsboys were calling out the news at the entrance of the hotel. Something took possession of me at that moment and, without stopping to buy a paper, I went through the hotel, straight up into my room, and sat down and wrote a short story that came

to me in a flash. It was the story that might have been Lowenstein's."

She is still looking through her narrowed green eyes into the future, or the past. Her life is an island in the streams of both. She is conscious of the psychic emanations around you, and she is certain of the tradition behind herself.

She speaks in the most casual and natural way about her past—not her past in this life, but long before she was born into this life.

"In my previous life I was a queen. I had great power and many lovers. Always I have felt the queen in me, always I have been conscious of it. When I was a child in Jersey I played alone, away from the other children. I was arrogant and proud and aloof. I used to take the nursery table-cloth and wear it over my shoulders like a robe. I was always reading fairy stories and dreaming of wonderful things.

"Now when I go into a royal castle or palace or court I feel instantly at home—in a way, that I have come home. I have no strangeness about me, none of that awkwardness that assails many people in strange and unfamiliar places. These places are perfectly familiar and well known to me. Where have I seen them before? Why do I feel so much at home in them? I recognise the uniforms of the officers at once. I know when anything is not in order or in place.

"I walked through these places in another life. I was a queen, and I am coming back to the places of my previous habitation."

She is very serious. She does not laugh when she adds :

"Of course I was not Cleopatra—as many people think they were. But I had enormous power, great

wealth, and lovers. One comes back and back to life to learn progress and to expiate faults, so that eventually the soul may be fit for some higher sphere. I was a wicked queen, so I had to return and work hard and win power through my own efforts."

I look away from this upright little woman with her red hair and narrowed green eyes gazing into something I cannot see. I see only the paintings on the walls, the beautiful blue Louis XV. chairs and sofas, the table at the long windows with flowers on it. We are dwarfed in this lofty room of another age.

On a chair at my side lies a lovely orange Persian cat, fast asleep. On another chair near Elinor Glyn is another apricot Persian cat, fast asleep. Elinor Glyn admires Voltaire, and she has named these cats Zadig and Candide from his books.

She speaks to them as she speaks to people. They understand her, she says : she will wrap one of them about her neck like a skin and drive in the park with him. On more than one occasion when her car has been held up in a traffic jam a park policeman has rubbed his chin and murmured : "I didn't think it was a live cat, ma'am."

"Cats have such tradition behind them," she tells me, following my eyes. "They go back to the year One."

She rises and walks over to the cat near me, touches his head, whispers something into his ear.

"This is Candide. He has such tremendous character. I made him the *heroine* of one of my books—*Love's Hour*."

I ask her what it is that makes some people detest cats. I tell her of a friend of mine who cannot bear the sight of a cat, who is really sick if a cat comes near her.

Elinor Glyn explains : " She must have been clawed by a tiger in her previous life. Lots of people have that fear and dislike. It is really the fear of the tiger who wounded them years and years ago."

She kisses Candide and goes back to her sofa. There is something serene and self-sufficient in her pose as she sits. You feel that not much—if anything—can touch or harm this woman. She has surrounded herself with a barrier, a philosophy, which is invulnerable.

" People are so small," she says gently. " They have such small minds. They reviled me for *Three Weeks*, because they were not big enough to see its inner meaning ; critics attacked me because they were jealous of its success ; always I have been the target of the mean and the covetous and the unworthy.

" But no harm has come to me because of that. I believe that you must be true to yourself in life, and give to life what you sincerely believe in yourself you have to give. You cannot be false. And you cannot break a law—God's or man's—without inevitable consequences. Christ's message of the other cheek has much more in it than most people realise. It is the man who strikes who is humiliated and degraded by the turning of the other cheek, by the indifference of the person who is struck.

" It shows that the struck one considers the other not worth bothering about—that he is beneath notice. Jesus Christ knew. But many people have their heads in the earth like moles. They need to look up and see God's sky and the stars.

" When I was in Hollywood making films, I slept for years on the roof under the stars. When you see those stars above you you begin to learn something about life and the smallness of people. I kept myself aloof in Hollywood. I was not tarnished, I hope, as

so many are by the false glamour and glitter of that place. There is something hard and artificial in Hollywood which destroys the good in most people. I came back to England untarnished."

She came back to make films here. She came back with high hopes, high aspirations and a certain amount of high newspaper trumpet-blowing. But unfortunately she did not succeed. Her efforts were received with severe criticisms and jeers.

" You would think," she says now, " that somebody might have appreciated what I was trying to do for the film industry of this country. I had a vast experience of the business in Hollywood, and there I was successful. I was willing to give this experience to this country, but my efforts were derided. The things some of the critics said are beyond belief. I lost a large sum of money over British films—and had to make considerable economies in my private life in consequence."

Elinor Glyn rises. She goes to the table and touches the flowers.

" These were bought at Woolworth's," she says quietly. " My clothes are cheaper than I have ever had in my life before. All my private life has had to be adjusted because of my unhappy film experience. It seems a pity, not only from my point of view but from the country's."

She comes back to her sofa, proud, erect.

" I don't mean that I have no money, or anything like that, of course," she says. " But I lost so much that I have to go carefully for a time. However, it does not matter."

Nothing matters but Truth, as she sees it. Nothing touches her. She tells me that she is not commercial, and that she leaves the titling and marketing of her

books to the publishers and magazine editors who buy them.

"They understand that side. I have given it up."

Elinor Glyn does not smile when she says this. The thing is done. It has been done by some one else who does not understand. What can she do about it now?

My eye catches sight of a lovely painting of her on the wall. When she sees my interest we walk over to it together

"Philip de Laszlo did that in 1914," she tells me.
"Here is another he did in 1927."

It is an exquisite thing, but much smaller, bringing out everything there is in this strange face.

"He is painting another one of me shortly. He loves my red hair and the bone formations of my face."

We move about the room. The Empress Eugenie blue of the covers on the chairs and sofas is of a delicate shade that I have never seen before. Elinor Glyn bought all the cushion silks from an old *antiquaire* in Paris. They were samples made for the Empress Eugenie.

We look again at the paintings on the wall. They look down on us. For me they are pictures of people who have lived and died. For Elinor Glyn they are friends, memories, intimate links of her life.

"The Polish Princess," she says, indicating her, "is such a sweet creature. I know her so well. We have so much in common. She understands me, and I understand her. When we are alone in the room together there is a communion between us that is very sweet and comforting to me."

We linger a little longer, touching various objects in the room, chatting idly. As I take my leave of her she says:

"I think of you as The Dane. I am conscious of Denmark somewhere in your background. And there is something about you—your hair, your eyes—I shall always remember you as The Dane."

She looks straight into my eyes as she says this. For the first time this afternoon I can see the full circle of the green eyes. For the first time she smiles, a friendly, charming smile.

She gives me her hand with a queenly gesture.

A moment later I am out in the street in the sunshine, knowing that I have had an extraordinary experience, reminding myself that that is Park Lane a hundred yards away, that this is the modern city of London in the year of grace 1933.



GRETA GARBO

GRETA GARBO

SHE crosses one bare leg, tanned brown by the sun, over the other. Her smoky-grey eyes cloud with thought.

She says suddenly :

" I took a sleeping draught last night. I could not rest. I was so excited at the thought of meeting my family again. It is always like that when anything exciting happens to me. I get so nervous. Then I have to take one of my draughts to calm me."

Thus la Garbo. Thus Greta Gustafsson, the girl from the department store in Stockholm who has become the greatest film star in the world. Thus—to her intimate friends—" Gee Bo." The most provocative figure of the last decade of films sits in the cabin of the liner that has brought her home from America to Sweden . . . and talks.

Her voice is perhaps the biggest surprise about her. She does not talk in the husky, vibrant tone that has whispered " I lauf you " to countless millions of talkie fans throughout the world. She speaks melodiously and quietly. Her English is perfect. Only a very few people know with what effort and unremitting study it has been made so.

You look at Greta Garbo for the first time in real life and the first illusion that goes overboard is that she is tall and lanky. You have always imagined, from her screen appearance, that she is at least a six-footer. Your eye measures her from your own height and you know her to be no more than 5 ft. 5 in. in her flat-heeled shoes.

You make a swift mental catalogue of the other features of her physical make-up while the cloudy eyes turn away. It runs something like this :

She is very slim. She has a transparent skin. She has the slenderest fingers you have ever seen.

Her calves are shapely. Her feet are much smaller than they appear on the screen. She walks with a long, free stride.

Her hair is pale yellow and she wears it almost down to her shoulders, where it curls up.

Her waist is small. Her breasts are firm and pear-shaped.

She doesn't use powder. Her cheeks seem to be free from rouge. Her lips are innocent of lipstick.

Her famous eyelashes do not come off. They are real. Every single lash is tipped with a tiny bead of kohl. They stick out at least half an inch.

She sighs. Her cultured English voice says—a little wearily : " You know I am really very tired. I have been working so very hard in Hollywood. Picture after picture. It is a great strain. I feel I want to rest and not do anything at all.

" I often wonder if there is such a thing as rest for a woman like me. Sometimes I doubt it. Sometimes I think I shall have to go on and on never being myself, never getting away from people and crowds. I am a restless soul seeking peace.

" That is why I remain aloof and elusive. People say : ' That is just the Garbo pose. She must always act like that to keep up the mystery.' But you know that is not true. I just want to be alone. I don't want to be mysterious at all."

She leans forward impulsively in her chair.

" Don't you think a film star is entitled to her own private life ? I can never understand why people

seem so interested in what we do, and eat and say. I do my work in the studio as efficiently as I can, and I believe that when I am finished I have the right to do as I like with my own time. There is no mystery about me. The public and the newspapers make all the mystery. I am a very simple person. I do not ask for much out of life. I only wish like every one else to be allowed to live in my own way when I have left the studio."

Garbo's moods are kaleidoscopic in their diversity. She can be a tomboy. She can act like a laughing girl. And then, in a flash, she is steeped in gloom.

She can look gay, wistful and tragic all in five minutes.

If you know something of her early life and her family's struggles you mention Paul Bergstrom's store in Stockholm where, as a girl of fifteen, she began work as an improver and later became a model for hats. Her smoky eyes grow moody at the memory.

Edith Hultgren, Greta Garbo's great friend, with whom she used to go to dances, is still employed at the cash desk in the hats department.

After business hours the two girls would put on their best frocks and go off to the Bella Napoli, the modern dancing pavilion out at Skansen, one of the open-air "lungs" of Stockholm. Sometimes they would go to Kastenhof and Rosenbad, two other well-known resorts.

Greta and her friend had little money; their jaunts used to make a considerable hole in their salaries.

Two other girls, Marta Lundhal and Ruth Holm, who stood at the same counter with her years ago, are now in the dress division of the store. Garbo, when she was little unknown Greta Gustafsson, used sometimes to go out with them as well.

She must sometimes ponder on the fate which has made her Greta Garbo, and kept Edith Hultgren at her cash desk totting up cash accounts, working from nine to six.

Greta Garbo's family life is as elusive as her own personality. Every one knows she has a mother somewhere in the background. But the mother has always remained a shadowy, unsubstantial figure.

Her father, Carl Gustafsson, is even more shadowy than her mother as far as the public is concerned. He died when Greta was fourteen, and when she thinks of him and of her sister Alva, who died of pernicious anaemia, she says bitterly: "Everybody whom I love dies."

But she never speaks of him, although she cannot forget the struggle he had to provide for his hard-working wife and his growing family.

There is a woman living in Blexingegaten Street now who used to be a neighbour of the Gustafsson's. Her name is Magnusson. She and Anna Gustafsson, Greta's mother, used to slip into each other's apartment to borrow a measure of coffee, much as families in similar circumstances will borrow a quarter of a pound of tea in England.

She watched Greta grow up from an angular girl into a plump young beauty. Then she watched her metamorphosis from shopgirl to mannequin, from rounded healthy curves to slender, transparent charm.

Garbo's family had their ups and downs and their hard times like most of the hard-working tenants of Blexingegaten Street.

Greta, at the age of fourteen or so, came home one day with a kroner which she shyly gave to her mother.

"Where did you get that?" asked Anna Gustafsson. Greta shook her head.

"Did you find it?"

No answer.

Eventually Greta admitted that she had found a spare-time job and had earned the money. But she would not say what the job was.

The next day she came home with another kroner. And the day afterwards she arrived with two.

Uneasy at the source of this mysterious income, her mother made inquiries. She discovered that Greta, on the way home from school, had been stopping to work at a barber's shop as lather girl.

Swedish barbers often employ young girls, not to apply lather to customers' faces, but to froth it up in a bowl in readiness for the barber's use. This—and keeping the razors clean—is what Greta had been doing. The money she received was her first contribution to the family exchequer.

* * * * *

The woman across the cabin sighs.

"I am so tired," she says again. "I am always rather tired. I get up at seven o'clock every morning to say good-morning to the birds, but I like to get to bed early at night. I am always tired."

You think of her sister Alva. She carries Alva's picture with her wherever she goes.

The seeds of tragedy were laid in the Gustafsson family by the war. Sweden, though neutral, suffered from food shortage. There was little sugar. There were no fats of any kind. Butter was at a premium. To families like the Gustafssons it was unobtainable. Even milk was scarce, while cream was out of the question.

The Gustafssons sat down to meagre meals composed mostly of slabs of Swedish black bread coated with an unsavoury apology for jam made from the ash tree.

To Greta in those days, robust and healthy as she then was, these privations made little difference. But they seriously undermined the health of her already delicate younger sister, Alva.

Greta was already well on the road to fame when Alva died. She had, in fact, just managed to get her sister the promise of a good position. Greta had just then arrived in America and cabled Alva to come out to her. But it was too late.

"Can't I go?" asked Alva, who had taken to her bed a few days before. Her mother shook her head sadly.

Two weeks later Alva was dead.

Carl Gustafsson had died a few years before, and his death had precipitated the family crisis that set Greta Garbo to work and ultimately led her to Hollywood and fame. At that time neither Greta nor her brother Sven were earning money. Her father's savings did not amount to much. Most of what he had put by was swallowed up in the funeral expenses.

The day after he was buried a solemn little conference was held in the Gustafsson household to decide what was to be done. Greta suggested that she should leave school and find work.

But her mother and brother were firm. They wanted Greta to have every possible chance.

The result was that Greta went back to school and Sven went to work.

But Greta finally left school when she was fourteen. She had no definite plans for a career, and like so many young Stockholm girls of similar class, she inclined naturally to work in one of the big shopping emporiums.

The most imposing store in the city is that of Paul Bergstrom, where eventually, after months of forced idleness, she was engaged on the 26th July, 1920. She was then fifteen.

There is still in the emporium of Paul Bergstrom her first employment card. Across the top is written her full name, "Greta Louisa Gustafsson." In the space at the foot usually reserved for the firm's testimonial and remarks when an employee leaves is written: "Left on July 22, 1922, at her own request in order to go on the films."

"Left to go on the films" What drama—what achievement—lies behind these words! On how many girls' employment cards, in every port of the world, have they been written! How few have been dragged from the card-index files of early employers to illustrate a tale of glorious success.

"Left to go on the films. . . ."

* * * * *

The ship is coming alongside the quay at Gottenburg and Garbo is on the deck. She is home. In a few minutes the gangway will be put out.

A blond young man with black eyebrows comes along the deck, hat in hand, to say good-bye to Garbo.

He is P., a twenty-five-year-old school teacher and poet, who has travelled tourist class on the ship from New York. He had never met Greta Garbo before he sailed, but on the morning of the third day out he wandered up out of the part of the ship reserved for tourist passengers and took a stroll on the first class boat deck.

It was 7 a.m. Suddenly he saw a girl with yellow hair peeping from beneath a grey beret, and with blue sports trousers and yellow pullover, standing hesitant with a deck shuffleboard stick in her hand.

He went up to her and raised his hat.

"Like a game?" he asked casually.

"Thank you," said Garbo.

And P. and she played together for half an hour

The next morning at the same hour P. again appeared on the first class boat deck. Again Garbo was there. Again they played deck shuffleboard.

He had caught Garbo in a romantic mood. Hollywood was thousands of miles away. For the moment she had forgotten that she was Greta Garbo. She was just a girl out to enjoy herself like any other passenger.

Afterwards P. came to the first class boat deck nearly every day and Garbo played with him. They spoke in French and German. They used Swedish for counting.

And Garbo nearly always won.

What they talked about together no other passenger knew. P. in fact, told an inquisitive passenger who asked him that he considered his friendship with the screen star too sacred for public discussion.

One other man, inspired by the young schoolmaster's success, tried to talk to her one morning when she was strolling on the boat deck. She walked away without a word.

So this strange and pleasing friendship between the great film star and the obscure schoolmaster went on day after day under the Atlantic skies.

Two or three days before the voyage ended P. wrote a poem, which he handed to her on the night of the captain's dinner. It was quite a good poem. The theme of it, of course, was Garbo. It pictured her looking out over the sea and realising its loneliness.

In one verse it showed her gloomily meditating upon life and realising that she was lonely also.

The copy that P. gave to Greta Garbo was his only one. He did not make a duplicate. He felt that it belonged to Garbo alone.

This young schoolmaster saw Garbo in many surprising moods. He saw her, too, in many surprising

costumes, but when she came to play shuffleboard with him she nearly always had on a different jumper and a different pair of slacks.

She had seven pairs in all. One a white pair, another a blue, a third a grey corduroy. Once, when the weather was so cold that all the other passengers were going about in heavy coats, she appeared in a pair of thin white cotton shorts.

P. probably got to know her better than any one has ever done since she left Sweden.

But this ocean friendship, of course, could only have one ending. And it is ending now with the young man standing bareheaded before her.

"Good-bye," he says.

"Good-bye," Garbo answers gently.

Their hands clasp. And then, in a low voice, the young schoolmaster asks if he can see her again, or if she will write to him.

Greta Garbo says quietly: "I never write to any one. Let it end here and keep it all as lovely as we have found it."

There is a pause. With a smile she holds out her hand again. A moment later she turns away, slips her arm affectionately through her brother's, and is lost in the crowd.

P. stands with his arms folded on the rail of the main deck, gazing out to sea. He looks lonely.

What are his thoughts as he watches the yellow-haired Garbo, with her flat-heeled shoes and her grey flannel skirt, pass down the gangway and out of his life?

LADY SNOWDEN



Photograph by
BASSANO

VISCOUNTESS SNOWDEN

WHEN I was a boy the name of Mrs. Philip Snowden was one that was frequently mentioned in my young presence. As my mother adjusted my string-like tie, or smoothed out the wretched starched collar that implanted in me the first seeds of my now chronic misanthropy, she would discuss with my elder sister, or with any one else who was in the room, the activities of this unknown woman.

I know now that my mother was sympathetic toward the aims for which Mrs. Philip Snowden was fighting. I could detect, even then, her admiration for the courage and character of Mrs. Snowden's attack. I think my mother would have liked to be in the battle for women's suffrage, which was then amusing diehard old gentlemen in all the best clubs ; would have enjoyed lending a hand in the temperance campaign that the Snowden woman was also waging.

It was Snowden, Snowden all the way in our household, and the thing got to such a state that every woman visitor was suspect in my eyes, and compelled to submit to a rigorous third-degree questioning. As none confessed to being Mrs. Philip Snowden, I finally demanded that the lady be forthwith invited to tea.

But I never had tea with Mrs. Philip Snowden. I never, in fact, met Mrs. Philip Snowden. She had won her fight for women's votes by the time we first shook hands ; had helped to put a Socialist Government in power—and seen it fall ; had done much to create temperance sentiment in England and turn people to total abstinence ; and had herself become Lady Snowden.

It's an event to meet for the first time in your thirties some one who was only a significant name in your boyhood. It's a privilege to know a woman who has seen achieved so much for what she fought. The thing that interests me most about Ethel Snowden is her reaction to a success that is largely illusory, her attitude to present-day triumph through yesterday's endeavour.

We talked it out not long ago at one of those unreal places in London that are as peppered with famous people as the gossip pages of the popular newspapers. Against the unreal background the sharper realities in which Lady Snowden has always been absorbed would stand out stark, grim, elemental. That was how I reasoned. I watched the calm blue eyes of this fair-faced woman as we talked. They remained quietly enigmatic. The firm lips of the very fine mouth which has opened to address more meetings than any other mouth (pre-B.B.C.) in this country, revealed little. The smile, slow and reluctant, was the smile of the fighter. Always on guard.

Well, Yorkshire has nothing on Scotland. The Yorkshire town that produced Ethel Snowden and dozens more like her in strength of character, in daurness and purpose, could not better my own home town whose pretty motto tells the world that the world might as well meddle with the devil as with the native-born. I know the breed well. The quiet eyes, the firm mouth, the inexhaustible reserves of strength and reticence ; the barriers against the outer world, the secret purpose hidden deep in the heart of them, the flint-like perseverance. The world's fighters. They'll fight for Self, or Socialism, or Success, or Women's Suffrage, or Better Babies, or Abolish the Slums, or Peace, or Prohibition. But they'll fight.

Ethel Snowden is just that—a born fighter. And she has learned the lessons of the fighter.

"The great thing," she said, "is not to work for results. Have faith in what you are doing, and get on with the job of doing it well. But don't look for results. They'll come all right. But perhaps not in your time. In somebody's time."

A touch of sadness in the voice? With almost any one else but this Yorkshire woman I would have said yes, definitely. Why not? She is living to see some of her dreams come true, and not all of them are nightmares.

We had been discussing the pioneering days of women's suffrage when she made the remark. In those early days when my mother was talking of Mrs. Philip Snowden as she might talk of a saint, the movement, although determined, was not militant. That was to come later—but Mrs. Snowden herself was never a militant. Art galleries were to be raided, museums attacked, fine houses destroyed in the sacred cause of women's suffrage. Old mansions were to be burned to the ground by sadistically-minded women working for the same end, female prisoners were to hunger-strike and be fed by force, and one woman was to throw herself in front of a Derby horse at Epsom to be trampled to death. Even the diehards in the clubs were to be stirred to apoplexy by the goings-on in old England in the early days of Votes for Women.

"You've seen that come in your time," I said.

The reluctant smile. No triumph here. What?

"With the result that every girl in the country has the power to destroy the country if she chooses," I said to provoke her.

She almost agreed with me.

"I think we have gone too far," she said in her low voice. "I do not mean this so much from the viewpoint of the individual voter, man or woman, but from that of the *number* of voters. The electorate is too big and unwieldy. It is difficult to educate, and its actions are incalculable. The situation has elements of danger in it."

She looked about her. Then she continued quietly, tentatively :

"If the voting age for both men and women were twenty-four or five it might be better. Perhaps some day the young voters themselves will see this and act."

So that was what achievement tasted like.

I followed her glance. The place was full of young women. Immediately at my left elbow was Margaret Whigham, whose photograph had appeared more times in the newspapers than that of any other society girl. Not far away was the Hon. Mrs. James Rodney. Across the room was Grace Wilson, and just behind her I recognised Frances Day. On every side were women, some young and attractive and gay, some elderly and grey and serious; all of them living in an age of freedom and feminine opportunity that was largely brought about by such women as the fair-faced lady at my table.

It was a thought. Did Grace Wilson vote? Did Frances Day? Did they think anything about it, or their privilege, or the long years of struggle behind their vote, as they drove to the polling booth? Or did they mutter: "Oh, fudge, another election! What'll the spring colours be?" Did the millions of other women in shop and office and factory throughout the country appreciate their good fortune? Or did they, at the end of their long hours, even on election nights, prefer the Barrymores to the polling booth?

It must, at least, mean something to know that you have given them the opportunity to choose for themselves.

"For twelve years," said Lady Snowden, "I addressed 200 meetings a year to audiences of anything from 1500 to 10,000 people. Not only about women's suffrage, but for the other great works that I want to see carried through successfully—the cause of temperance and universal peace."

Five million people spoken to over a period of twelve years. Does she regret one moment of those years with their strain and effort? She had to withstand incessant heckling and interruption—especially in the early days.

In one of her first speeches on women's suffrage the chairman was a little tactless, and Mrs. Snowden opened amidst a fire of derisive commentary.

"Every one of us hopes," she began, "to leave this world a little better than we found it. Without that hope our lives would be empty. Every one of you hopes in some measure to repay your mother for all she has done for you. I know there are many Liberals here to-night and I want to make a special appeal to them to justify Liberalism by being liberal. Mr. Gladstone once said . . ."

A burst of booing broke out against Mr. Gladstone, to be followed by a counter cheer for him. Finally the cheers swelled up, and toward the cheerers the slim figure of Mrs. Snowden bowed and said: "I thank you for that cheer for so great a man." From that moment the audience was hers. It was a great exhibition of platform tact from a girl in her twenties.

"And now peace?" I said tentatively.

"Permanent and universal peace," she answered determinedly. "It's the one hope for the world. I

would like to see that established. I work to bring it about."

Outside, as we had entered the building, a newspaper placard told of a Japanese ultimatum to China. The French government had fallen because an incensed electorate, breathing hatred against America, had demanded that their debt should not be paid. Germany was split between Hitler and Hindenburg. Mussolini was hinting at territorial expansion. In a room in Dublin, de Valera was fulminating against the British Government; in a prison cell in India, Ghandi was doing the same; in his private suite in Persia, Rizi Khan was preparing the blow that precipitated the oil crisis. In every country in the world military officers were planning campaigns for the next war, and Victor Gollancz was just about to publish a book explaining the character that it would take.

"It doesn't look too promising at the moment," I suggested.

Lady Snowden was not dismayed by my enumeration of the forces arrayed against peace.

"You know what I said about not working for results," she said. "Actually at this moment there is a greater *will* toward peace than ever before. More people are against war than ever before. Do you know of any one who wants war?"

I mentioned the usual figures.

"I mean—among the people you meet," she said. "The ordinary men and women. Do *they* want war? They want permanent peace!"

There was a glint in the blue eye.

"It will come," she declared confidently. "Maybe not in our time, but it is much nearer than many people think."

"The Japanese want to find fresh territory for their

immense population," I remarked. "What can we do about it? That situation makes for war."

"Give them a place to go to."

"Some people might not want to do that. Where would you suggest?"

The merest suggestion of a twinkle in the eyes.

"Why not the middle of Australia? It's all desert. They could develop that."

I demurred: "The Australians might have something to say about it."

"But why have a war over it? There's nobody there now. The Australians could not possibly be adversely affected by such a move. Why not give it to the Japanese. They'd work it all right!" She broke off at a tangent. "Besides, the matter is really one for birth control."

I stared at her. She had mentioned the subject as if the last word had been said upon it.

"They ought not to have such large populations."

"But great bodies of public opinion, religious and otherwise, are opposed to birth control," I pointed out. "It's not so easily disposed of as you think."

She listened.

"Do you know, for instance," I continued, "that the Irish Free State will stop the circulating of newspapers or books publishing anything remotely resembling an advocacy of birth control? Do you know that British newspapers have been banned in that country for just that reason, and that to-day no English newspaper goes into the Irish Free State with frank and open discussions on birth control, divorce, and the other important sociological subjects in its pages?"

She could scarcely believe it.

"And English newspapers submit to that?"

"A great many of them do."

"I wouldn't tolerate it!" The glint was definitely in the eyes now. The lips were firm and straight. The Yorkshire lass in Lady Snowden had come to the top. A minute before we had been talking of universal and permanent peace. Now there was in her all the opposition to petty tyranny and interference that is in most normal healthy people.

"I wouldn't stand it!" she declared. "It's all wrong of the newspapers to put up with it. You never win anybody's respect by submitting to them so meekly. That's largely what's wrong with this country to-day. We keep on trying to please people, doing this, that, and everything else for them, and we make the greatest mistake."

She was quietly roused.

"Look at what happened when my husband took his stand at the Hague! He stood up to the French, and all Britain was behind him. And all the world had a new respect for this country. We need more of that kind of thing. We can do too much trying to please other peoples. If you'd heard some of the things French people have said of us when we thought we were doing something that would win their respect and support, you'd be very much surprised."

I could understand now why millions of people had flocked to hear her when she addressed meetings, could understand why every woman in the land had won the right to vote, could almost hope for ultimate peace. Given an army of women like this, what might not be accomplished? Even if the Australians *were* momentarily bothered by the settling-down in their midst of the surplus Japanese population!

The Lady Snowden in action. The Mrs. Philip Snowden of my boyhood come alive at last!

"I wouldn't be dictated to by any one. You've

got to be able to stand up for yourself and for what you believe right if you're going to do anything in life."

And so, naturally, from peace to total abstinence and temperance legislation. From something that she hoped to do to something already accomplished. America had savoured prohibition with all its attendant evils. In England, by legislation and lecturing, we have probably attained to the most temperate period of our history.

Even in this unreal place where we sat the reality of temperance had penetrated. At most of the tables, where tomato juice aperitifs had been swallowed, the clear, unstimulating bottles of tonic water, Vichy and Evian stood up like monuments to a bibulous and headier past. The eyes of the people were clear and clean. The men looked as if they did a good job of work. There probably wasn't a bottle-a-day man among them. There probably wasn't a bottle-a-day man left in the whole of England. The type was dead, as dead as Votes for Women. Legislation had killed him off; legislation and lecturing. To-day a drunk man—a man so fuddled with liquor that he is not in control of his actions—is a rare and monstrous sight. Public opinion has been so educated that decent men are ashamed to be seen in his company, and decent women will not tolerate him. Even in the various night-clubs, where there are many inducements to forget the restriction of society, a drunken man is such an oddity that he is at once suspected of being a spying police officer in a dinner jacket.

This was the woman who had done so much to bring about this amazing state of affairs in a country once famed for its hard drinking. A fortunate woman to achieve such sweeping changes in her own lifetime; a fortunate country that had the wisdom to prefer

temperance to prohibition and thus save its citizens the humiliation of booze rackets, organised graft, Al Capone gangsters, and the complete breakdown of all law and order.

To have done so much ! To have seen the face of England change like a woman in a new make-up ! She must be a very happy Lady Snowden.

"Life is never so full as you expect," she said slowly. "You expect so much at first. That is why, later, you learn not to struggle for immediate results. Women got the vote and one thought that so much would happen ; but did it ? The Socialist Government came after years of work and struggle ; the world seemed to go on much as before. The war that was to end war was brought to a conclusion ; and humanity to-day is in a terrible mess because of that same war."

She foresaw that it would be so. She made the first speech against the Treaty of Versailles which almost every one now acknowledges to be the cause of so much international friction. That was at Zürich, at a conference of the Women's International League. The terms of the treaty had been published the evening before, and Mrs. Philip Snowden sat up all night to study them.

The resolute voice went on :

"But good work has been done. People are changing. The *will* to peace, to humanitarianism, is evident all around us. There are temporary set-backs and disappointments. But we are going forward all the time."

And again the reminder : "We may not see everything come in our time, but some one will reap the benefit of all our work."

There was another disappointment in her life that struck very close to her dearest private interest—music. When you mention music to Lady Snowden

all the fighter disappears. The blue eyes lose their impenetrable quality and are flushed with a soft light. Something softens in every part of her. She seems to glow. You sense that in music she must have found much comfort in her bleakest days of striving, that from music she must have drawn, as some people go back to draw it from their native air, a reserve of strength to continue the battle. Music has always been her comfort, her solace, her forgetfulness.

We discussed it that day in relation to broadcasting. She had been a Governor of the British Broadcasting Company and had worked strenuously in their service. It was literally a labour of love with Ethel Snowden, and a golden opportunity. She wants good music to go into all the homes of Great Britain, and she worked to that end.

She talked now a little sadly.

"I now wonder if the Government really wanted me to work—whether I was not really expected to occupy that important position as a figure-head."

She was sad because she had been retired from the board. She did not know, until the evening before, that a fresh set of governors had been appointed, one of whom was to take her place. The newspapers had wind of the new appointment before Lady Snowden. They surprised her by asking her to confirm the information. She could not do that; she knew nothing about it.

Life, I think, has been a little like that for her. Given so much after so much struggle and work. Taken away a little at the moment of greatest success. That is why, I think, she is guarded and slightly on the defence. She has learned to look for the come-back.



She rose. Fair, fifty-one, full of courage. I went with her to the door, a little proudly because of my respect for her fine qualities, a little humbly because of the merit of her achievements and the inadequacy of my own.

Behind us there was the pleasantly subdued din of finality. The bright young emancipated women were saying their good-byes. The empty tonic-water bottles were being cleared from the tables.

Results. Results. Even in our time.

Outside the evening paper was still offering its Japanese ultimatum to China to an apparently indifferent world.

Lady Snowden and I turned to one another and smiled.

VICKI BAUM

Photograph by
HOPPE

VICKI BAUM

I go in through the swinging door to the hotel lounge. The door revolves behind me—endlessly, endlessly. Pretty women pass in, leaving the fragrance of rare perfume in the air. Business men hurry past to keep appointments. A girl on her way to meet her lover draws the wondering eyes of the uniformed commissaire. Romance is all around me. Here is a beautiful and famous actress about to lunch with the author of her next play. There is a great explorer, home for the first time for many years, feeling the tread of soft carpets strange beneath his feet. An orchestra is playing somewhere in the distance.

A thousand lives are being lived under this single roof. At this moment, perhaps, a man is dying in room 66 and a woman is planning murder in 148. The old lady in 94 is drawing up her will, cutting out a weak-chinned nephew who has waited half his life for her money ; and the girl in 29 is telephoning her closest friend that she is going to have a baby.

Romance and drama ; love and hope ; disappointment and death. All around me in this grand hotel. Perhaps the man in 66 is not really dying, but is only suffering from indigestion ; perhaps the girl in 29 is merely telephoning her hairdresser for an appointment ; perhaps the woman in 148 is planning not murder, but the scheme for the new wing of her house in the country. What does it matter ? I am on my way to meet for the first time, Vicki Baum, the woman who wrote *Grand Hotel* and changed the lives of a million people who used to holiday at boarding houses. She is the woman who discovered that Life

Goes On ; that the same roof may witness birth and death ; that people are not always what they seem. Discovered all that, and made a very good novel about it as well

So for a moment, under her spell, I rip the walls off a hundred bedrooms, and look into the lives of men and women who turn shamed, scared faces away from mine. Awful lives ! Twisted, thwarted, frustrated lives. How can they possibly live them ? But what else can they do ? You cannot have too many suicides, even in a grand hotel. It would spoil the story. One death, yes. Perhaps two. But no more. I had never thought until this moment of the hundreds of people who linger on heroically in life to preserve its decent dramatic balance. Living masks. Just ghosts—hidden behind the walls of their hotel bedrooms. Who knows what I am going to find behind the walls of the room that shelters Vicki Baum ?

* * * * *

Not sudden death, anyhow. There is abundant life in this golden-haired blue-eyed Viennese woman, who is not a bit like her pretty photographs that pretend she is young, doll-like and insipid. She was young once ; she may even have been doll-like ; she was certainly never insipid.

The chorus girl with the lap dog that I had expected is nowhere to be found in this gentle, middle-aged woman of forty-three, composed and controlled beyond belief. Vicki Baum has a complete grip of herself, so that at no time in our conversation are there any of those restless sawings of the air with which so many English hands help out our inadequate conversation. There are no hand movements of any sort. She sits perfectly poised, almost demure, speaking our language without effort.

Her eyes are alert and vivacious—bright lights in the quiet face of a woman who “has been shot at.” I can think of no better colloquial phrase to describe her face. It is the face of a woman who has lived and suffered and worked and triumphed—and understood. It has that complete understanding of life that you would expect from her books.

She is one hundred per cent feminine, with all the allure of the feminine woman. She is slim and straight and very fit-looking, and she makes clever use of dark clothes to focus her fairness. Somewhere in her there must be the masculine streak that made her the successful editor of a magazine, but there is no trace of it in Vicki Baum, the world-famous author.

We talk of *Grand Hotel*, because *Grand Hotel* on this day when I first meet its author is still unique. It has not yet started the vogue for books and plays dealing with the lives of a dozen people influenced by some central circumstance or location. That vogue—with its dinner-party situation, and its luxury liner situation, and its Continental-Oriental train situation—all showing the reactions of people caught up in the web of environment—was to trail its way through the years immediately following the novelty and success of *Grand Hotel*. But at this moment Vicki Baum holds the world copyright of the discovery that Life Goes On. She wears the honour with composure.

“Of course,” I say to her, “the dancer in *Grand Hotel* was obviously based on Pavlova.”

You remember the dancer. She is the dominant feminine note in the story. Faded and tired, she studies her face every day, watching for the crow’s-feet and the tell-tale lines of old age, and all the time she is haunted by the necessity of keeping slim so that on the stage she will appear as light as gossamer. She

is the lonely woman who grasps eagerly at the unexpected love of the young adventurer who has planned to steal her pearls.

Vicki Baum smiles sadly.

"One night I stood in the wings of the theatre where she was performing," she answers. "I watched her on the stage and she seemed to float on air. It was beautiful. Then later I saw her in the wings when all the animation had vanished, and she seemed suddenly very old and very tired. Her director told me of the struggle it was to keep her weight down, and of the dieting and discipline of her life. She seemed a very tragic figure to me."

Vicki Baum is sensitive to the real characters of men and women behind their masks. She has, like most women who have succeeded in creative literature, a oneness with the separate individuals of the crowd. Her business men are real business men, her crooks are logically crooks, her young anarchists are the so-true and so-common products of a disillusioned post-war world. They are not "types" to her. Each is a human being with a story.

It is quite true that she worked in an hotel to be at closer grips with the characters for her novel.

"Nobody knew who I was," she explains to me now, quietly and composedly; does anything ever disturb this serenity? I wonder. "The other people in the hotel saw me as they saw the other workers, and probably forgot all about me. But it gave me an opportunity of soaking in the atmosphere of a big luxury hotel."

The atmosphere of a big hotel. She saw drunken men being put to bed with their boots on, watched elderly husbands quarrelling bitterly with their young wives, sighed over the honeymoon couples who wan-

dered dreamily along the corridors with their arms interlaced. Out of the lives of the hurrying or harassed or bored visitors she conceived her story. The hotel orchestra played somewhere in the distance, the switchboard girls put through the calls to the different bedrooms, the revolving door whirled ceaselessly on its axis. People coming, people going. Nothing happening on the surface. But behind the bedroom doors drama and despair and heaven only knows what.

She accepts a cigarette from me. She puts it between her expressive lips. She looks down at her small feet. Let's forget all about *Grand Hotel*, she seems to say. And we do. After all, it is only one of a dozen books she has written. We talk of the private life of Frau Lert, wife of Richard Lert, conductor at the Berlin Opera House. And Vicki Baum's blue eyes sparkle, for she is Frau Lert, and she is always happiest—I know now—when talking about her home, her husband, and her children.

She met her husband when she was a harpist, studying for a musical career.

"When I was playing my harp in the orchestra I had no thought of writing," she says. "I had never written anything in my life, and neither of my parents was at all literary. One day I fell seriously ill, and as I lay in the throes of a high fever all the incidents of my childhood came back to my mind with astonishing clearness.

"I remembered things the ordinary adult mind has forgotten. I recalled little intimate incidents of childhood which must have been latent in some obscure cell of my mind, but of which I had no knowledge. When I got well again and was convalescing, I amused myself by writing down what I had remembered. One day a friend of mine came to see me and began

to turn over the pages I had written. He became interested, and asked me if he might take them away to read at his leisure. I said 'Yes.'

"Two or three weeks later he came to see me again and said that he thought that he had taken an unpardonable liberty, and hoped that I would forgive him. He had shown the manuscript to a prominent publisher, who wanted to publish it immediately as a book.

"That was the beginning. The book was published and enjoyed quite a success, and I began to write seriously."

Then she got married. The cares of a home and the arrival of her babies put a temporary stop to her literary career. But not for long. Somehow Vicki Baum found time to write another book, and that definitely brought her success.

She writes now in a sunny room of her very modern flat in Berlin. It has every possible labour-saving device, and every detail of the domestic routine comes under her personal supervision, novels or no novels. She is an expert cook, but the meals at the Lert home—like the meals at most German homes to-day—are simple and scientific. With all her work she is determined to keep fit.

"I have a passion for sport," she confesses, as if her boyish figure were not sufficient evidence. "For almost every form of sport. Every morning my own trainer watches me do my physical exercises. I love walking, but I like also to drive my own car. When we go to our country house near the Grünwald, I take the wheel. I like speed."

She is still sitting in front of me. Her hands have moved only to carry the cigarette to and from her wide mouth. She has talked of her dozen books, and

her success, and her physical training, and her home and cooking, and not once has she dropped her perfect control ; not even in her enthusiasms, which are quietly vivacious. I think of some of the women I know, with their expressive gestures and fingerings. Vicki Baum is a change.

Not even when we talk of Wolfgang and Peter, her two boys, does she lose her grip, although the blue eyes seem to grow a little brighter. We discuss modern parenthood and education. She is completely modern in her outlook, this forty-three-year-old woman who crams so much into her life. She has no use for the old-fashioned methods of suppression.

"Wolfgang came home from school one day and gave me a problem that most parents have to face at one time or another." She crushes the cigarette into the ash-tray and her hand drops on to her lap and lies relaxed and motionless. "He told me that some of the boys at school had been reading amusing and naughty books by a man called Casanova and another man called Boccaccio. Apparently they kept them hidden in their desks because the masters would punish them if they discovered them. Wolfgang wanted to know if *he* could read Casanova.

"I did not hesitate for a second, but simply said : 'Go into the library and take all the books by Casanova and Boccaccio that you can find. There is one by Boccaccio called *Decameron*. Read that. Read them all. But let me tell you now that I think you will find them very dull and boring. I don't think they're a bit naughty. But go and see what *you* think.'

She smiles again. The eyes sparkle. The hand lies still on her lap.

"Wolfgang spent most of the evening searching for those naughty stories in Casanova and Boccaccio. He

gave it up as a bad job in the end by coming to me and protesting that he did not want to open the books again. They were, he said, boring and dull. So dull."

Yes, completely modern. She hides nothing from her children. Her boys so far have none of the inhibitions that march side by side with most of us from the cradle to the grave. She is determined that they shall grow up, as most German children shall grow up, strong and clean and unafraid. She is really a portent, this small calm woman. She is the new mother and wife who can do everything as well as her own mother did, and the hundred other things that her mother could not do.

In their country home among the tall pines and the soft mists of Grünwald the Lerts live a healthy, open-air life. They are a very happy family, made so because the very wise and level-headed Frau Lert knows when to push Vicki Baum gently but firmly into the background. There is no world-famous author in the Lert home; there is only the woman who knows how to look after husband and children. In the country she is like every other warm-hearted woman—she does the odd, impulsive things that make life worth while. She spends hours with her dogs and cats, goes off on shopping expeditions to the little shops, reads the books of other authors (many of them her friends) who envy but welcome her own success. She has no foolish ideas about fame and success.

But at this first meeting I do not know all this. I have to learn that later. So, when we discuss success, I listen to her at first with perhaps the faintest trace of scepticism in my smile. She meets it with her bland and amazing self-sufficiency.

"Fame really does not mean much," she reflects.

"Isn't it your own Bernard Shaw who says that fame does not make him happier than the ordinary man? It does not make him digest his food better or prevent him from having a pain in his leg. Nor can it bring him peaceful sleep. It is nice to know in yourself that you have succeeded, of course; but it means little that people talk about you or even recognise you in public."

"Some of the loneliest people I know are the most famous and envied. With many people something changes in them with success and achievement; they take on a new personality which seems to take them farther and farther away from the men and women they were before. Often, too late, they discover they cannot go back along the way they have travelled, and they are lonely in a new world for the people they were in another. It is very sad."

She pauses, and then continues :

"I know a brilliant woman, one right at the top of her profession, whose life is just a maze of worries. She was hard, and pushing, and determined to succeed. She has done so, but her domestic life is a mess, and I think that she knows little of happiness. Once she had a love affair—a lovely thing that made her softer and more human—but that was a long time ago. I don't believe she knows anything now of the softer relations that exist between people. You could not really call her life *living*. The humblest young man and his girl, looking understandingly into each other's eyes and finding there all that they want to know, are miles above this woman in the supreme achievement of human happiness. I think that she realises this sometimes, but she cannot capture it now."

She breaks off rather abruptly. She rises and we wander together to the window.

"No, I don't want *only* success. The real things in my life are my husband and home and children."

Vicki Baum draws the curtain and we look down into the courtyard below. She catches my eye and the momentary sadness goes out of her. She answers my smile, understanding it.

We are looking down on the people coming and going about this grand hotel; down on the hooting taxis drawing up to the big glass door; down on the insolent private cars with their freights of lovely women and successful men; down on the passers-by, envious of the luxury within their reach but not within their grasp.

Vicki Baum smiles.

The door revolves endlessly. Business men go in to keep appointments. A girl on her way to meet her lover draws the wondering eyes of the uniformed commissionnaire. Romance is down there in the courtyard and the lounge. There is a beautiful actress; there a famous explorer. A thousand lives are being lived beyond that swinging door at this moment.

We watch the people coming and going.

"They all want the same thing," Vicki Baum says. "Happiness. They are all going their different ways to win it. And you cannot win it. It comes, and you know it for what it is, or you pass it by. They make me feel just a little sad."

My eyes leave her for the people beneath. They belong to Vicki Baum, really, these people. They are hers. It was she who saw the hopes in their lives as they passed through the doors of the great hotel, she who told their story. She had the imagination to see through the closed doors of their bedrooms and through the open eyes of their masks.

There they go, each with a story. Perhaps at this

moment a man is dying in room 66, and a woman is planning murder in 148. The old lady in 94 is drawing up her will, and the girl in 29 is telephoning her closest friend that she is going to have a baby.

Perhaps at this moment in this same grand hotel two people are standing at a window looking down into the courtyard below. They are silent. The woman is small and slim and goldenly fair. The sparkle has died in her as she watches the people around the revolving door, and a soft sadness, like a Spring shadow, lies in the blue pools of her eyes. She stands very still. Perhaps she is wondering about it all and the meaning of it.

Perhaps she is Vicki Baum. Perhaps she is Frau Lert



EILEEN BENNETT

SHE has, I should guess, the best figure of all the women tennis stars. When she appeared for the first time in her now famous shorts, at Lady Crosfield's tennis party at Hampstead, as much attention was given to her legs as to the scanty garments that draped them. They are very nice legs indeed, a pleasant change from the legs of so many other women athletes —swimmers, golfers and tennis players. They are the sort of legs you expect to watch at a first-class revue or musical comedy. They are too good to be true for Wimbledon.

We watched them, Eileen Bennett and I, in a news-reel film, not long after they had made their spectacular début. We fixed our eyes on the shorts.

"I thought so," Eileen breathed in the darkness of the theatre, "too short!"

The lightly-clad figure on the screen ran backward and forward on the court, volleying balls across the net, crashing cunning back-handers right away to her opponent's baseline.

"Yes," into my ear again, "too short! Just too short. A couple of inches or so would have made all the difference."

"Oh, I don't know." I am not so easily put out by the sight of a woman's knee. When people come to my place to play tennis they play in bathing suits or bathing trunks. It's the only possible way if the weather is good enough. "I think they're rather jolly. They're certainly right for playing games in. What are you worrying about?"

"They were all right when I stood still. They looked just like a wide short skirt. But I hadn't allowed for the movement that makes them seem much shorter than they are." Her voice in the darkness is quite apologetic. Not to me, I hope. To that vast public which saw the film, perhaps. To the thousands of women who want to hear the why and why not of it all. She goes on—she *must* be thinking of them: "The difficulty is to get these shorts just right both for movement and standing still. I don't want to have them so long that they're ugly. Still, these are just too short. I'll have them made a couple of inches longer in future."

"I like them as they are."

She does not answer. The film is moving into a close-up. I glance at her and see that she is quite anxious about it.

"It's awful seeing yourself on the screen like this," she whispers.

"You wouldn't fool me, would you?" I murmur. It is one of her own favourite forms of expression, and I feel that she deserves it at this moment.

A more than life-size Eileen Bennett grows out of the flickering screen. It begins to talk.

"Listen to that voice!" comes the soft wail at my ear in the gloom. "It's so hard and metallic. I don't speak like that, do I?"

In the great cause of truth, and to make things right with the many people who saw that news-reel, let me say now that she *does not*. Blame it on the weather, or the atmospherics, or the sound film, or anything you like, but don't put it on to Eileen Bennett.

Her voice is just like any other woman's voice. Neither hard nor soft. Neither specially marvellous nor specially bad. A good voice. A particularly good

voice for a tennis star. A voice rather like Madeleine Carroll's. And as the lights come on in the theatre, I think again how very like Madeleine she is in appearance.

She has the same golden hair, the same shape of face with the broad cheek-bones, the same sort of wide, red mouth, the same excellent teeth. For a moment you think she has the same kind of eyes. But Madeleine's are blue and Eileen's are hazel. It is the soft blue tint in the whites of her eyes that deceives you for a second.

You would never associate her with the tennis court, unless in shaking hands with her you were struck by the firmness of the clasp, and, glancing down, saw her beautiful right arm. In summer it is possible to see this right arm quite often, for then she likes to wear flowered, sleeveless dresses. It is an arm of great strength and beauty.

You would probably connect her with the stage or the films. At first glance she appears to be the type of successful young actress who gets her pictures in all the papers. If you saw her in the street, or in a restaurant, or at a party, you would think: *Now where have I seen that woman before? In what play? In which film? Is she Evelyn Laye, perhaps; or Ursula Jeans?* And your instinct would not be so far out. For Eileen Bennett wants to go on the films; and Douglas Fairbanks, to whom she has mentioned this longing, thinks it is "a swell idea." She goes to the movies three or four times a week. Name any of the latest films to her and you will find that she has seen them; talk about the well-known stars and you will discover that she knows all about them and their methods.

At twenty-six it is her tragedy—if you can call it a

tragedy to enjoy every minute of life—that she has never taken her tennis seriously enough to indulge in the self-sacrificing martyrdom that puts champions where they are. She has always treated it as a game. A game to be played and enjoyed, win or lose; a game with lots of fun in it, and sometimes lots of exasperation. But a game. Not a profession; not a task; not a life work which must come before everything else.

She has never got up regularly at dawn and gone out to a cold tennis court to hammer efficiency into herself long before the other members of the family were awake. She has never set herself a task of listed "musts" and "must nots," never indulged in rigorous physical exercises. She has always kept herself fit because she likes to be fit, not because she has had her eye on a cup or a medal or a cheering crowd. She does not drink, because she does not like alcohol. She smokes, but she does not inhale. It just happens that she does not; she did not wilfully train herself *not* to inhale. She slips away from a party before midnight to go to bed, because she is bored; not because she feels that her beauty sleep will improve her game.

Her tennis stardom, in fact, is the happy accident of her liking for the game and her continual playing of it. Eileen Bennett did not set out early in life to be a champion, but early in life she liked and played tennis. She has always played. When she was very young she used to go to Frinton with her parents. There she played a great deal of tennis; there she still plays a great deal of tennis. But she has never been coached in the game, never been specially trained for big tournament tennis.

She went to school until she was eighteen, then she

went to the South of France with her mother, and the opportunities for tennis playing were plentiful. Her mother, knowing that Eileen was a good player, encouraged her all the time. Her mother was as keen as mustard about her daughter's game, and she was at Cannes in 1928 when Eileen scored her first big success by beating Betty Nuthall.

"Mother was much keener, really, than I was," Eileen says. "You know what a help mothers are."

I know. Mothers are like that. I have one myself. They get us where we are.

But Eileen Bennett's mother had more foresight than most mothers. Her instinct for her daughter's future manifested itself as early in life as the occasion of her daughter's christening. She had Eileen christened "Eileen Bennett Bennett" in case Eileen might at any time after her marriage want to use her maiden name. Her second Christian name of Bennett made this possible. That was looking ahead with a vengeance, but who shall say that it was looking ahead too far when, a few months after her marriage to Mr. Fearnley Whittingstall, the artist, Eileen decided to play in the championships at Wimbledon under her maiden name?

* * * * *

She is always popping up in the newspapers in one way or another. Editors like her photograph and the unusual things she does. They featured her well and truly in her shorts. It was the silly Summer season in Fleet Street, and the world was getting a bit tired of the failure of the Economic Conference. Eileen Bennett in tennis shorts, with accompanying picture, was a welcome change. So welcome, indeed, that the importance they seemed to attach to it staggered Eileen Bennett herself.

Before that there was a story that she had cancelled a tennis tour to South Africa to take up work in a West End beauty parlour ; and still further back, of course, was the account of her wedding, in her Court dress, at St. Margaret's, Westminster. There were five hundred wedding guests, and the police had difficulty in controlling the crowds.

Now she works in a West End sports shop, selling tennis shirts, golfing jackets, and swimming suits to women who want the very latest ideas in sporting wear. I should think she sells very well too. The last time I was in the shop she almost sold me an amazing swimming suit that was certainly never intended for this old body. "Life would be awful without a sense of humour," Eileen once said to me. Her sense of humour was working on all cylinders with that particular swimming suit.

We were having lunch together when she made that remark about a sense of humour.

"There's an awful lot of nonsense in life," she went on to say. "People take themselves and their lives so seriously. If some of the people in London had a sense of humour do you think they would carry on the way they do ? "

"Meaning ? " I asked.

"The silly existence some of them lead in the West End for instance. The artificiality and unrealness of it all. The insincere cocktail parties—could anybody with a sense of humour go the giddy round of them ? And the time-wasting, too, and all the gadding about that leads to nothing and nowhere ! "

I remained silent. I knew her mood, but I wasn't going to spoil it. A cross-section of the mind of a famous tennis star is worth seeing whenever the occasion offers itself. So often that

cross-section reveals nothing but a marked-off tennis court.

"I've done my share of it, of course," Eileen Bennett said. "I've gone to the night clubs and done all that sort of thing. And it's all right once in a while. But to make that your life, as a lot of people do, is so futile!"

She picked up a morsel of cutlet on her fork. And suddenly she laughed at herself. Her mouth laughs up the right side of her face at first and then centres itself as an afterthought. You get used to it after a while, but it is amusing at first.

"Some people would laugh if they heard me, I suppose. They've probably seen me doing the very things I'm criticising now. But I'm not at all inconsistent. I believe that the important thing in life is not all that nonsense, but is the person you're with. Companionship. That's what counts. The rest doesn't matter. I'd rather go to a snack-bar with some one I like than to the Ritz with some one I don't."

She put down her fork.

"Don't you agree? It's the simple things that are really worth while if you have the right people about you. That, I think, is the secret of life. People seem to deceive themselves, or get so caught up in the excitement or the false glamour of a certain kind of life that they can never get back to simplicity. Sounds like a lecture, doesn't it?"

"Anything but. Sounds very much like what I think myself."

And then with the same engaging frankness: "I'm an idealist. Of course, I've given up believing that most people are what they seem to be, but I still hold a lot of beliefs I started out in life with. I believe

that what I want out of life I shall get—if I want it strongly enough. And I want simplicity and good friends. And, like all women, I want babies. Of course I would like to be the world's champion tennis player. Who wouldn't? I love playing the game and I like to win. I like Wimbledon and the big matches. I play best to a gallery—and that seems like a contradiction to all I've been saying.

"All right. Let it be a contradiction. I'm full of contradictions. Just like you and other people. I do like playing to a crowd. It makes all the difference in the world to my game. I like to hear the buzz of their interest all around me; I like to feel their sympathy; and when I rise to it and do some really good work I like to hear the appreciation of their applause. Of course I like that. I'm only human.

"But I like also to play in the little competitions where I meet a lot of my old friends. That is why I'd hate to do anything which would lose me my amateur standing. I wouldn't then be allowed to play in the smaller and jollier competitions on the seaside courts which I go in for now."

She laughed up the right side of her face again, and asked me the time. When I told her, she said :

"Must be back at the shop at two."

"We've time yet. Tell me more about the idealist."

"Not much to tell. I'm young enough to believe that just round the corner is everything I want."

"It's just round everybody's corner," I replied sententiously. "The important thing is not the corner but the wanting."

"Right in one! Well, I still wake up in the mornings wanting. What do you say to that?"

"Not bad for the hoary old age of twenty-six."

"And I've still got my sense of humour. That's the important thing."

"I wonder. It never gets you anywhere, you know."

"But it gets you everything that's worth while," she replied.

I argued: "You can't imagine the people who really do the big things in the world having a sense of humour. It can be a considerable drawback to a person—a sense of humour. It always allows one, for instance, to see everything objectively—to see the other fellow's point of view. And that is fatal."

"I can see that," she agreed. "Mussolini, for example, can believe only in himself. If he saw any other point of view but his own he would be weakened?"

"Exactly. It's his strength that he can down everybody without a qualm. The same with Hitler. Can you imagine Hitler thinking of the other fellow for one single moment? He sees the other man only to defeat him. That's his strength, and the strength of all people like that."

Eileen Bennett said: "So success lies in slaying your opponents?"

"Without a sense of humour!"

"But look what they lose! Everything that's worth while in life. All the fun of everything."

"They wouldn't believe it, even if you told them so yourself," I said.

She thought for a moment; then: "I've seen people like that in all walks of life. Men and women set out deliberately to achieve some goal. They make friends who will be useful. Every luncheon they give has some object behind it, every dinner is hiding some scheme. They do nothing that does not bring their goal nearer. In a way, they can dehumanise them-

selves to bring it about. They have no use for you when you cease to be able to help them ; they drop you like a brick."

" I know. They're away from home, or the telephone is out of order, or they are looking the other way when you are near."

" And they get what they want. Ruthlessly they set about it, and ruthlessly they achieve it. And sometimes they are quite charming and sincere and likeable in spite of it all."

" Not the women," I protested. " The men, perhaps, yes. Because in taking on the hardness that drives them to their goal they take on, almost, an added masculinity. A man can assume hardness and gain by it. He is adding to his male stature. But a woman can't."

She leaned across the table.

" You mean that she drops her femininity ? Of course ! She's bound to."

" And therefore her charm."

Eileen Bennett said : " It's true. Most of the successful women who have got there through sheer drive have had to shed a little of themselves in the process. That, I suppose, is through having chosen the masculine way. What a pity that they did not remain feminine."

" They might," I said, " have got there quicker."

" Cynicism !" she answered. " And not allowed in this discussion, which is all pure idealism, romanticism, and sincerity."

She laughed again, showing the lovely teeth behind the red lips. I was willing to go on with the conversation, but time was getting on. The sports shop in the West End had to be attended to. The women were waiting for their swimming suits and tennis shorts and

golfing jackets. I showed her the face of my watch—reluctantly.

We rose from the table. Our conversation had got a long way from tennis. I feel that Eileen Bennett might get a long way from it too.



ELLEN WILKINSON

ELLEN WILKINSON

"THIS," she said, putting into my hand an evil-looking weapon, "this is another of the homely gadgets of a Nazi Brown House prison."

It was a black, spring-steel rod about two feet in length, divided into three short sections which telescoped into each other so that the thing could be carried unostentatiously in the hand or slipped into the pocket.

"It was used on a woman," Ellen Wilkinson said quietly.

I telescoped the weapon to its smaller size and then allowed it to fall out to its full length. I tried to think of the person who had held this sinister thing in his hand and used it on another human being. The *feel* of the weapon was evil.

"They're quite common in Germany," Ellen Wilkinson told me. "And they're used for beating up people who don't see eye to eye with Hitler."

I put the thing down and picked up a solid rubber rod. It was about two inches in diameter, and eighteen inches in length.

"That's a fine idea they have," she said. "Very clever and diabolical. It injures the deeper tissues of the body, but does not mark the outer skin. It leaves no trace of a person having been beaten up. But it inflicts terrible pain."

I wiggled the solid rubber rod in my hand. I brought it down sharply on the table. I tried it against my leg.

"Yes, I can believe you," I said, and put the rod

down. "I don't like it a bit. What is this collection you've got? A museum of horrors?"

Her face was very serious.

"Just evidence. Evidence of what's going on in Germany. You know I'm doing work in connection with relief for the persecuted people of Germany. I'm going to show these weapons at a speech I'm making next week." She lifted another object from the table. "What do you think of this one?"

I fondled it. It was just a little fellow—a springy, rubber thing, shaped like a small dumb-bell or a dog's bone. It fitted into the hand rather playfully. The sort of thing you might throw about the garden for a dog to go after. Solid and springy.

"The Nazis use that for hammering on a person's kidneys," the quiet voice said at my side.

I held it by one of its knuckled knobs and drummed on the table with the other.

"What a devilish idea."

"Devilish!" She made a short breathing sound that was neither a laugh nor a snort. "These are only a *few* of the awful weapons being used on poor people now. I've seen worse than that. People in this country have no idea of what's going on in Germany—particularly in Nazi Brown House prisons."

We gazed for a minute or two more at the collection of horrors. They were lying on a table in Ellen Wilkinson's bedroom. She lives in a small flat in Bloomsbury, a flat which has one room for sleeping in and another room in which she works. There is a very spick-and-span kitchenette in which she prepares her own meals.

Then we walked through to the other room, very much a working room with its black steel-and-chromium desk littered with papers, its black portable

typewriter holding an unfinished letter, its black modern-type telephone, and its shelves of books. It is a gay, airy room with plenty of light and colour. There are fresh touches of green in the decoration, the walls are of a bright cream shade, and the painted ceiling, shining like a mirror, reflects the orange of the curtains and gives space to the tiny flat.

"My one luxury," Ellen Wilkinson says of her painted ceiling.

There are modern pictures by German and Russian artists, there is a portable gramophone on a shelf, there is a window which looks out on the tops of houses across the street. For we are at the top of this house, and Ellen Wilkinson has to run up and down the stairs to the street door whenever her bell rings. I puffed and blew, myself, the first time I went up those stairs, but she takes it as being all in the day's work. I think she takes everything as being part of the day's work.

The last time I saw her, for instance, she was just going off to make a speech somewhere in Scotland. Within the space of seven days she was to travel to Scotland, make her speech, return to London, travel to Spain and deliver a speech in Madrid, and come back to London for an important Trades Union conference. She told me about it as she sat down in her chair at the black steel-and-chromium table.

"It's going to be a bit of a rush," she said, "but I think I can manage it all right."

"You'll manage it all right," I assured her. "What are you going to Spain for? What are you going to speak about?"

"German relief."

German relief. Belgian relief. Miners' relief. Workers' relief. Somebody's relief. So long as there

are people at all there will be causes for which other people like Ellen Wilkinson will struggle and fight. There will always be work for the Ellen Wilkinsons of the world. The world is so full of the people who make her, and her anger, possible.

She is the little Dollfuss of political femininity. Four feet nine inches in height, and a fighter to her finger tips. The little people of the world, some one has said, are always the fighters. I have always found that to be the case. All the little men I have met, from General ("Brass Hat in No Man's Land") Crozier, of Black-and-Tan fame, to Charlie Chaplin, have had drive and force behind them. All the little women, from Ellen Wilkinson to Fanny Ward, have had that indefinable something in their physical and mental make-up that gets things done.

She has brown eyes, and that other mark of the fighter—sandy hair. The eyes are kindly and quiet, not a bit what you would expect in a woman whose whole life has been a perpetual anger. They are wise, understanding eyes, and as shrewd as you'll find anywhere. Not much of the shoddy and artificial and unjust will escape those eyes.

She wore a green dress that day, and not a single piece of jewellery. I thought, as she sat down amid the litter of typed letters : *You're a worker. You're happiest in work.*

And I remembered in a flash what Beverley Nichols had told me she said to him at their first meeting : "I am working class. All my people are wage earners. That is why I haven't really much sympathy with the people who don't work. I have a little flat. I do all the work in that flat, except for a charwoman who comes twice a week. I cook my own meals. I give luncheon parties. This morning, for instance, I was

working hard at articles and speeches till nearly half-past twelve. I had five people coming to lunch at one. It was ready for them. It wasn't too much to do. Why should it be ? "

She was born in a Manchester slum—the daughter of a cotton mill worker—and began her education at Ardwick school. Later, in her school Parliament, she was always made the Socialist candidate because there was a rush for the Conservative and Liberal sides. Determined to hold her own, she swotted up her subject and grew to make it her own.

" What chancey things make us what we are," is her way of explaining how it all came about.

At one time she went Communist, but she has modified her views about that, just as she has modified her views about other things.

" I don't believe nowadays," she said to me that day, " that the world can be so easily altered. When I was quite young it seemed possible to do anything. An injustice, or a scandal, seemed such an obvious thing once it was stated, that one thought it only had to be stated to be removed. I know better now. I used to think that it only needed enough conviction and feeling to change everything. One *felt* so much that one thought other people must feel the same way and want to do the same things." She shook her head. " Not now ! "

" Despondent ? "

" Not a bit ! " The brown eyes gleamed. " Not even disillusioned. But I'm much more realistic than I was. I see the shape of things better than I did. I don't believe these shapes can be changed quite so quickly as I had thought.

" I think that the hope of the future lies in a kind of communism that still encourages and develops in-

dividual initiative. I don't believe Russia's quite got it, although all the Russians I know are happy." She smiled out of her broad mouth. "As happy, that is, as any Russian can be."

We talked of several aspects of Russian life. I mentioned Dora Russell's enthusiasm for the crêches there, where mothers leave their babies and go back to give them milk.

"I don't know much about that," Ellen Wilkinson said. "You see, I haven't got a grain of maternal instinct."

I looked at her as she said it.

"Not a grain of maternal instinct," she repeated, looking the perfect matron. Her soft brown eyes, her pleasant smile, everything about her indicated the motherly woman. I could picture her dandling a baby on her knee and going completely gaga at the sound of his gurglings.

"Not a grain! I'm not that kind of woman at all!"

She's the kind of woman who, at a Labour conference, can stagger her colleagues by the imagery of her phraseology. When, all fire and fight, she rises to the attack, nobody is safe. She has more than once coined a phrase that nearly lifted the roof off the building. She says frankly what she thinks, and is no respecter of persons. Once she declared emphatically that Lady Snowden (then Mrs. Philip Snowden) ought to be slapped for criticising Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. The same Mr. Ramsay MacDonald has been criticised since in no uncertain terms by the same Miss Ellen Wilkinson.

When she is bitter her tongue is like a lash. She dislikes expensive women, the parasitical London product who do nothing to justify their existence, and has a phrase for them which I cannot repeat. She

despises the face massages and perfumes and cosmetics by which they achieve their "beauty." She is provincial enough to hate a lot of things about London life, and she is glad of it.

"I am the complete provincial," she said to me. "Although I like London and many aspects of its life, I shall never really belong to it. I think I am like most provincials in that respect. We never fit in. At the back of our minds all the time is the knowledge that we are in an alien city, watching a lot of foreigners doing their queer stuff. Their ways are not our ways. They have no idea of the great country that lies outside London, or the habits and customs and way of living of the people outside London. They are appallingly ignorant of the struggles of the working people in the provinces. They can think only London, and they believe London is the world."

"Yet I like the liberal London life. It is broader than the provinces. Here you can breathe and expand, and not feel that your neighbour's eye is at your key-hole all the time. I like going to the theatre. I like the friendliness of people. I am very happy in my work in London."

Always the provincial. Always fighting for the woman in Wigan and the man in Manchester. She was organiser of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies from 1913 to 1915. Then for ten years she was national organiser of the National Union of Distributive Workers. In 1923 she became a City Councillor of Manchester and a year later was elected to Parliament for East Middlesbrough. She has hacked her way through Labour conferences, downed her opponents in fiery debate at Trade Union meetings, stood up for her convictions in the Mother of Parliaments. And mention a lovely picture to her, or a piece

of music, or a good play, or an intelligent book, and the brown eyes soften and this little tiger becomes a kitten.

There was room, even in our talk about workers and war and communism, for the Ballet Jooss. We had been talking about the foolishness of many of the international conferences between statesmen. She was getting all worked up about the subject, laying about her at the drivel that came out of them when, casting about in her mind for a comparison, she remembered *La Table Verte*.

I had seen the Jooss ballet just the previous evening. As soon as I said so her anger evaporated.

"Well, you know what I mean. That marvellous ballet showed it all up. The silly statesmen who meet to make peace, make war instead, meet again after the war is over to patch up matters, and fall out among themselves once more. It was all in that. The whole futile business. Wasn't it great ? "

In between times she does some excellent journalism. She can write good newspaper articles which always convey something of her anger. She writes with spirit and sincerity, and it was natural, I suppose, that she should have been led off the straight and narrow path and encouraged to write in 1929 a perfectly terrible novel about the General Strike. It was the kind of novel which makes people say : As a novelist you're a good politician.

But in spite of its crudeness, it had the same sincerity running through every page. Towards the end of the book Ellen Wilkinson really got into her stride and laid about her with the old gusto. Read this page from *Clash* and you have Ellen Wilkinson in your mind's eye for all time. It comes at the end of a meeting arranged in a West End house to raise funds for the miners.

Before she could reach the platform a younger woman had risen, a fashionable society girl. With a little giggle she said she wasn't used to speaking, *she* wasn't a paid agitator, but she did just want to say that really it was all nonsense, this talk of people starving. No one starved in Britain. They could all go on the dole. Every one knew that was why no one could get decent servants nowadays, the workers just lived on the dole, and their children were fed at school. But they weren't properly grateful. No one was grateful nowadays, and really, with taxes so high, it was the rich that were to be pitied, and why didn't Joan Craig and Mr Cook go to Russia if they didn't like England? With another little giggle the girl sat down to laughter and applause that showed she was voicing the exact feelings of the greater part of that audience.

No chairwoman could hold Joan back then. She stood in front of the dais with her hands clenched, her face dead white. She was too moved for passion, her voice sounded cold and hard.

"I came to speak to you to-day against my will," she said. "I have always earned my own living and I have come to beg from women like you—you who are kept in luxury by the efforts of other people. I humbled myself to beg for your charity for the miners, the men without whom the workers of this country could not have won *your* war, the war that kept *your* dividends safe and *your* homes unscathed. These men risk their lives every day for the comfort of selfish, idle people like you, and I have to come and beg for charity for them. What I am saying now will close your purses, but I believe that if the men I know in the coalfields had heard what has been said here to-day they would be grateful to me for sparing them the final humiliation of your grudging almsgiving."

That, in the words of the vulgar, is what might be termed a mouthful. A mouthful of Ellen Wilkinson at her fighting best.



JEANNE STODDARD

Photographer

JEANNE STOURTON

I

I TURN the pages of the illustrated weekly and yawn over the pictures of bored women on shooting sticks. I saw them in this same journal seven days ago, on these same shooting sticks, wearing the same bored expressions. But then they were at Lingfield—now they are at Plumpton. Who would know that it was Plumpton? Who would care? A handful of people, perhaps. The bored women themselves; the photographers who have wives and children to keep; the printers of the periodical; the men who run the newspaper clipping agencies and are paid by many of the bored women to spy out every printed mention of them in the press of the land.

I get away from the shooting sticks and the bored women with their men friends, who never seem to be their husbands. I come to pages sprinkled with debutantes who look like film actresses and film actresses who look like death. The same familiar faces. The same names. A different hat from the week before, a different frock. But the same smile or the same languor. Has nothing changed since a week ago?

. . . and (left) is Miss Jeanne Stourton who, of course, is always regarded as Margaret Whigham's double. She is the youngest daughter of the Hon. Mrs. Herbert Stourton.

Another page slips between my thumb and forefinger, a page gay with groups of women and a few men who might be mistaken for women.

. . . (centre) is Miss Jeanne Stourton at the cocktail party given last week by . . .

I pick up another illustrated weekly. It scarcely differs from the issue of the week before or the one I have just dropped on the floor. Time stands still in this small world which seems only to eat and drink, dance and golf, sit on shooting sticks and hunters.

. . . Miss Jeanne Stourton (right) was another of the Society girls who acted as programme girls at the French Picture Matinée.

. . . Miss Jeanne Stourton, who is a niece of Viscount Southwell, caught by the camera at the special charity performance of "Helen." . . .

There are a number of these weeklies at my feet. I have gathered them together for just this purpose, and I open them at random.

picture shows another group at the Café de Paris—Miss Jeanne Stourton with Mr. John Henderson and Mr. John Hanbury. . . .

. . . supper time at Monseigneur. Seen above are Miss Jeanne Stourton and Mr. Jocelyn Beauchamp. . . .

. . . in the crowded ballroom. Mr. Baring and Miss Jeanne Stourton seen in the foreground. . . .

2

It is eight o'clock in the evening, and the telephone is ringing in a tiny flat in a mews tucked away somewhere behind Baker Street. The Hon. Mrs. James Rodney speaks into the mouthpiece, puts the instrument back on its bracket, and turns to us.

To me she says : " Jeanne Stourton's going to be late."

And to her husband : " Jimmy, let's start."

He glances at the clock.

" What time does the play begin ? "

I tell him " half-past eight," and he says " Right ! " and makes for the champagne. Frances Rodney and I proceed to open four dozen oysters and set them on the small table. There is scarcely room in this little room for four people and four dozen uneaten oysters, and the problem is solved in the only possible way to the only possible kind of conversation for such a meal. The minutes tick themselves pleasantly away while we gossip, and I am just telling them of my difficulty—or my taxi-driver's difficulty—in locating their obscure mews flat when the door opens, Miss Jeanne Stourton is announced, and Miss Jeanne Stourton comes into the room, lifts the words from my lips, and ends the story of our mutual trials almost as part of her greeting.

" Am I a saint or am I not ? " she demands, and waits for no answer. " All the best children in your neighbourhood have been playing hide-and-seek with my taxi-driver for the last ten minutes. He kept going this way and that, but could he find your place ? Could he ? What with opening his door to whisper intimate little confidences to me, and bawling at people on the street corners, we've had a grand time. We must have been in every mews in London. You ought to have little maps for your friends. A new game for winter evenings. Find the Rodneys."

She does not smile when we smile. She continues to talk in her quiet, soothing voice with the curious crisp bite in it. She makes her points in short staccato phrases, and she knows—like every good dog owner—

that when you speak softly you have to be listened to. We listen.

Jeanne Stourton at this moment is the tiniest bit "up-stage." She has built up her entrance very effectively, and she stands looking at us now, an extremely decorative bit of work in a lovely evening frock of silver lamé with white organdie puff sleeves. Like all good artists, she can stay outside herself and measure the quality of the picture. She is conscious always of the effect she is producing, and nothing is farther from conceit.

Every wise woman knows that the first business of woman is to make herself attractive; only the vain ones think otherwise. Jeanne Stourton is wise in a wise generation of girls who can gaze into their mirrors and put out their tongues at what they see; and who can also, fifteen minutes later, blow an affectionate kiss to the same, so-different mirrored face. I imagine that she spent not a minute more on her preparations for this evening of ours than she would for lunch with a girl friend, but she has used her time and her talents well, and she is having her artist's moment of silent applause.

She is a white swan in this small room. A rather tubby little swan, it is true, but still a swan; very straight, very sure of herself. Her dark head is still and proud on the graceful neck, and her black eyes are proud and secretly laughing as they look at you. They seem to be very black against the whiteness of her flawless skin. Her eyelids have been creamed, or vaselined, and are softly moist in the glow of the electric light. Her lips are moist too, moist and startlingly red. The same red gleams on her finger nails against her white frock. Very, very decorative. A foam of white swan, a dark proud head, a bow of

bright red mouth, darting points of red as her hands move. Where are the photographers?

She sits down. She will not have champagne; Jeanne Stourton drinks only water. But she smokes. She fits a cigarette into her holder now, and it sticks out at an absurdly assured angle from the absurdly assured face.

I mention a caricature of her that has appeared in the morning paper. She shoots me a swift, intimate look from the dark eyes.

"All chin and forehead! I know!" She sighs in mock resignation. "That's me. I might have been born for caricaturists. But the joke about this one is that the artist put it under a heading WOMEN I'VE MET. I've certainly never met *him*!"

Long filigree Spanish ear-rings hang down from her dark head. A cluster of white orchids lies against her right shoulder. A bracelet of trinkety odds and ends jingles from her left wrist. There is a tiny jade green elephant, a small silver coin, a gold cannon, a little whirling wheel with the words *Je t'aime* picked out on it. A dozen of these trinkets are on the bracelet. She wears it night and day, with everything.

And—of course—she is not a bit like Margaret Whigham, whose double she is supposed to be. There is a superficial resemblance, a flashing likeness, that is all. This gay little, much-photographed, twenty-years-old Society girl, is very much Jeanne Stourton. Very much the girl of the illustrated weeklies, although, as she sits chatting with Frances Rodney, punctuating her conversation with surprising Americanisms like "surely," and "I certainly am," I get the feeling that behind her composure there is perhaps the same self-questioning and uncertainty which are in most of us. Which are certainly in James Rodney and me, for

instance, as we glance at the clock and, with typical male apprehension, think of our reception at the theatre when we arrive half an hour late and disturb the people who are already enjoying the play.

In a minute or two we mention our fear. The two women rise at once. Jeanne Stourton flicks the cigarette from her holder, and we make for the door. The next round of the gay life is beginning.

3

It is nine o'clock. The first act of Ivor Novello's play *Fresh Fields* at the Criterion is half over, and as we go down the stairs into the theatre I am glad that I had the instinct to secure seats in the centre of a row, against the aisle. We all feel a little guilty as we walk toward the fourth row of the stalls ; we have all in the past cursed late-comers who have annoyed us at a show.

"Very naughty," Jeanne Stourton whispers to me as she goes first into the row. "And my fault. I'll tell you why later."

But it is not so naughty. We have timed our arrival to a gust of laughter at Lilian Braithwaite which holds up the play for a moment. We disturb nobody. If they notice us at all, these laughing people, they must feel sorry that we have missed so much of a very funny play. In a few minutes we are settled comfortably in our seats and are laughing also.

It is not the first night of a new play, and there are few of the "usual" people around us. This production has been running for some time, and all the men and women who look out at you from the illustrated weeklies have long since seen it. They are not

here to-night. The people in the stalls now are the well-dressed, never-mentioned backbone of anything, whether it is the nation or the theatre. They pay for their seats.

"I like this better than a first night," Jeanne Stourton whispers to me, doing her stuff with her long black eyelashes. And as the curtain drops on the first act and the lights come on in the theatre: "Yes, much better." She looks about her. People are politely interested in this white swan, but they do not charge up from their seats at sight of her. "First nights bring out the squawking theatrical people, and I can't stand many of them. Insincere."

In her staccato way she has given her verdict. She catches the eye of Frances Rodney.

"Let's go out and smoke."

We all go out to the bar. Admiring eyes follow the women, because both of them are very beautiful, and each is exquisitely dressed. We sit in the bar, but we do not drink. It is pleasant to sit in a theatre bar like this, smoking and talking, discussing the play in peace and quietness. There is none of the pandemonium of a first night, which we have all experienced at various times. None of the hysterical women who hail each other, and everybody else, as "darling!" None of the theatrical "knockers" or the flashlight photographers, or the gossip-writers. Only ourselves and a passing acquaintance of Frances Rodney's who smiles a silent greeting. There will be no picture in the papers to-morrow of

. . . left, Jeanne Stourton in the interval at "*Fresh Fields*" last night. . . .

There will be no gossip paragraph about her filigree

ear-rings, or her companions, or her resemblance to Margaret Whigham. But she seems to be bearing up quite nicely. She has perceptibly come down to our earth, even if she hasn't drunk our champagne.

We go back to the theatre, back to our seats in the fourth row of the stalls, just before the lights go out.

Jeanne Stourton glances at her programme and bubbles with quiet laughter. I bend toward her to follow her forefinger. She is laughing at the name Ivor Novello has chosen for his principal characters. The name is Bedworthy.

4

It is midnight at Ciros. Lou Preager's band is playing something that goes "*You're wonderful, you're beautiful, you're gorgeous, you're divine,*" and the rectangle of dancing floor is crowded with swaying couples. Against the walls on the sofas sit some of the loveliest women, and some of the most important men, in the world.

It is all very gay and bright and animated, like a very good Hollywood film that you never believe in. In fact, to-night it is almost *too* right. The right people are certainly here, even to the Prince of Wales, who has a party at the table in the left-hand corner near the door—and near the band. There are so many personalities in this place to-night that you might be reading the gossip page in the *Bystander*.

We have ordered food and drink, and while we wait for it we look at the different tables and speculate who is with who, and why. Jeanne Stourton knows most of the people present. All of them seem to know Jeanne Stourton. She sits smoking her Chesterfield

cigarettes, endlessly smoking her Chesterfield cigarettes. As one is finished another is begun. She talks quietly about the people in this gay club, fingering the long cigarette-holder with her red-nailed fingers, and I am wondering why she smokes so much. Frances Rodney takes her husband off to dance, and I join Jeanne Stourton on the sofa against the wall. She does not want to dance yet. She did not get to bed till four o'clock this morning, and it is midnight now. *You're wonderful, you're beautiful, you're gorgeous, you're divine*, plays the band.

"It's nearly four every morning before I go to byes," she says, watching the thronged floor. "I'm a bit tired to-night, not because of that, but because I've had a heavy day. That's why I was late to-night. And my feet are tired too. That's the worst of being a shop girl."

The worst of being a shop girl.

There is anything but self-pity in the voice. The worst of being a shop girl seems to be that she likes it. I glance at the pale face, at the bright, black eyes. They are very much alive. They are missing little of what is happening in Ciros to-night. She is a very wide-awake white swan. It will certainly be two or three o'clock before she is in bed to-night.

Yet at half-past eight to-morrow morning she will walk into her job on the second floor at Selfridges. There will be no hang-over from this evening, nothing in her appearance to suggest that she played Cinderella. All to-morrow she will walk through the different departments of Selfridges' Women's and Children's Outfitting, speaking to customers, advising old ladies, encouraging the assistants. She will have her hour for lunch, like all the other workers in that vast store, and her twenty minutes for tea ; and at seven o'clock

in the evening she will come out into Oxford Street and hurry home to change.

Dr. Jekyll and Miss Stourton ! By day, because she has to work for her living and support her mother, the hard-working shop girl ; by night, because she knows everybody and belongs to the set, the hard-playing Society girl.

I have seen her at her work after one of these four o'clock mornings. I went with her once all over that unending second floor. She was not then a girl in evening dress with orchids against her right shoulder, and filigree ear-rings flirting with her soft neck. But she was the same Jeanne Stourton, in a blue two-piece suit and black and white buckskin shoes. The same lurking laughter was in her eyes, and on her left wrist the same jingling bracelet of trinkets.

"Good-morning, dear," she said to the liftgirl, and "Good-morning, dears," to the first group of shop assistants we encountered. After that it was a gramophone record of "Good-morning, dear," and "Good-morning, Miss Stourton."

We moved among the coats, dresses, jumpers, bathing suits and heaven only knows what. Jeanne Stourton, terribly efficient, indecently composed, kept just a shoulder ahead of me.

"Good-morning, dear."

"Good-morning, Miss Stourton."

The girls adored her, of course. You could see that in their eyes and in their smiles.

"Morning, Gloria."

"Good-morning, Miss Stourton."

"How's your mother, Gloria ?"

Gloria told her. We passed on. I met her eyes, and she smiled—a little arrogantly, I thought, because she was conscious that she knew her job and was showing

me that she knew it. She knew where everything was, could tell the price of anything. It was a gross piece of exhibitionism. So to pull her to earth I murmured :

“ There’s just one thing lacking—a spotlight to follow you around and shine on you doing your stuff. You’re acting grand ! ”

She smiled her mocking, silent smile. We went on to another floor, where Jeanne Stourton showed that she was equally popular and equally enlightened. That did not surprise me. I remembered that she had started in the perfumery department of Selfridges, and that before that she had been in a hat shop, and bought flowers in the Covent Garden market. A knowledgeable kind of girl altogether.

And now as we lean against the sofa in Ciros, and the mob dances on the packed floor, and the Prince of Wales asks the band to play a tango, I understand why her feet are sore, and why the butterfly of the illustrated weeklies prefers to sit and talk. There’s all that second floor to be covered to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow.

“ But it’s fun. I love it.” Fitting a Chesterfield cigarette into the long holder. “ It’s a world in itself. Do you know anything about a big store ? When you begin you’re put in a classroom, with desks and ink-pots, and taught all about the business. How the customer is always right ; how, if you can’t sell goods by telling the truth, you mustn’t sell them at all.”

She pauses to make sure that I am really interested. She goes on :

“ After you’ve been in the classroom for a week there’s an examination at the education office, and if you don’t pass, you go back to school for another week. You have to learn everything about cash on delivery, waiting remittance, ‘ pay at end,’ the letter

order department, cash taken, and cash sent and goods entered on account.

"Then you must learn to tie up all parcels with a special house knot, and fix special labels on parcels which are being sent as presents, and remember that the bill must not be enclosed with these. One of the rules of the house is that we must never leave our hats or coats in the department, and we must never use the ordinary doors of the store. Before we can take a parcel out of the store it must be checked out with a locker pass signed by the superintendent. The whole organisation is run with the efficiency of an army. And the discipline!"

I smile to myself. To talk of discipline at this hour.

"The first week in a big store is pretty hectic. You'd hardly believe the things a shop assistant is asked in the course of a day. I've directed a customer to the lift to get her to the basement and been asked whether it was 'up or down.' On my first day some one asked me where she could buy socks for hot feet, and another came to the perfumery department for boot cream."

Her glance wanders to the next table where a fat man is eating asparagus.

"That makes me think of our staff canteen," she says, and thanks me with her eyes as I push the cigarettes toward her. "Very good too. We have an hour for lunch, either at 11.30, 12.30, or 1.30. If you are on the last shift you are allowed ten minutes to have a cup of coffee during the morning. Tea-time is either 4 o'clock or 4.30 and, at ordinary times, you get off duty at 6 o'clock one week and 7 o'clock the next week. Oh, and of course, once a month you have a Saturday morning off, and two weeks holiday on full pay every year. Am I a walking advertisement or am I not?"

I let her go on.

"We have buyers and directors who started as lift boys, and there are scores of well paid jobs. Superintendents get three or four pounds a week and buyers can earn £1000 a year. That's the job I'm going to try for."

The band is still playing. The Rodneys come back to our table, and we go on to the floor to dance. This is the gay life. There is laughter at the tables, and noisy chatter, and the pleasant tinkling of glasses. The bright smiles of lovely women make this place in the early morning something fairy-like and detached from life. Outside, beyond the drawn curtains and the walls, is reality. At this moment in Piccadilly the first street cleaners are clattering their nozzleed hose-pipes against the hydrants. At this moment in a dozen London clubs the waiters are adding up bills, or warning members that it's time to finish their drinks, or yawning surreptitiously behind their hands. At this moment everywhere shop girls are dreaming of just this kind of moment at Ciros.

The shop girl with me says :

"Let's call it a day."

We call it a day. The four of us go out into the lounge and ask for two taxis. We shake hands with the Rodneys and they go off in the first. We step into the second taxi, and a moment later are out of Orange Street and headed for South Kensington. The white swan at my side shows no sign of weariness. She does not slump in the taxi. She sits as erectly upright as ever, her dark head proudly silhouetted against the passing street lamps. We talk a little, in that three-o'clock-in-the-morning mood that is like brandy after a good dinner.

The cab stops and I jump out on to the pavement.

The girl in white comes out, ghost-like, from the deep gloom of the taxi. She lights up into real flesh and blood as she steps out. We have arrived at her home in Fulham Road—the two rooms above Spink, the butcher, where she lives with her mother.

We stand for a moment together in the silent street, making another "date." Then she fits her key into the dark door and disappears. I wait for a moment. A light comes on in the room above the butcher's shop.

Jeanne Stourton has gone up to bed.



ALICE HEAD

WHERE does one begin with Alice Head ? One knows there is no end to what can be said about the woman, but where does one begin ?

With a picture of her accompanying a millionaire to St. Donat's Castle ? How useless that would be if you missed, through ignorance of her earlier life, the point of contrast. Then begin at the beginning with her unromantic girlhood ? How dull, you would say, and —with a yawn—turn the page and miss the lot. Perhaps, then, with the strange cables that were being opened at Alice Head's desk while you were having coffee this morning ? How bewildering if, not belonging to that little circle in Fleet Street which is privy to her secrets, you have never heard a whisper of this amazing woman and her fantastic career.

Let us begin then at the lunch I had with her yesterday at the Ivy restaurant. Let us even end there. Let us go from the tomato juice cocktails with which we began the meal, through the melon and the steak and kidney pie, to the fruit and coffee with which we completed it ; and on our way let me tell something of her story.

The uniformed boys salute her with respect. They know—these human indexes of the social standing and financial status of London's West Enders—that she is the highest-paid woman journalist (and probably the highest-paid woman) in this country. They are bound to know, too, that she is ambassador here for that playboy millionaire of the western world, William Randolph Hearst.

But not many other people in this place know. Alice Head comes quietly to the table. Beneath the small red hat there is the usual quiet smile. Everything about her is quiet.

Around us the noisy little actresses chirp and chatter. They are bright and animated and terribly hopeful. Most of them are spending more than they can afford on their Ivy lunch, gambling that a hundred-to-one chance will draw some producer's fascinated gaze in their direction. They may get a job out of their spendings, so they turn their blonde heads this way and that, and their bright, fixed smiles flash round the room like artificial sun-rays.

Alice Head sits amid the gay hubbub and drinks her tomato juice. She scarcely looks about her. Her small, pert face is in repose. She is so negative, in this crowd, that you might think her dull. Only in her brown eyes is the twinkle that shows she sees and understands.

We talk shop almost from the first taste of the melon. We have a mutual faith in the destiny of A. J. Cronin, who wrote *Hatter's Castle*, and our opening concern is about his next novel. The newspaper with which I am connected serialised Cronin's first book. Alice Head has bought much of his subsequent material for her own publications. A long time ago we discovered our common faith in this author at another lunch—one of these luncheons for a dozen people or so—when some one disparaged *Hatter's Castle* and dismissed Cronin as a one-book man. At the sound of such sacrilege, Alice Head raised her eyebrows. I raised my eyebrows. Across the table we shook our heads slowly and mournfully at each other in compassion for one who could not see the light.

So now we talk of Cronin ; and as she talks, telling

me about her conversations with him, about his early life and so on, a little part of me is absent. It is somewhere above us at the table, aloof, detached, gazing objectively at this woman.

It sees her as the kind of quiet person I have tried to describe. Quiet, unassuming, almost painfully modest. Charming, friendly. Anything but a woman in a million, says this detached part of me, and starts to ruminate, for it knows that the facts are all against it.

Not so long ago Alice Head was earning a pound a week at the publishing house of Newnes. A London girl, from an ordinary middle-class family which had never seen a millionaire except in the *Tatler* at the dentist's, she had been educated at the North London Collegiate School for Girls. Her future seemed certain. She would advance as steadily in the publishing business as it was reasonable to expect of a woman in those days.

But reasonable expectations in the career of Alice Head were shattered by intoxicating realities. In no time she was an editor—of *The Woman at Home*, bought by Lord Riddell and given to her to make a success. Then came an offer from the National Magazine Company. "It's better than anything we can give you at Newnes," said Lord Riddell. "Take it!"

So she became connected with *Nash's Magazine*. That was only the beginning. The company published *Good Housekeeping* in America, but not in England. Alice Head worked to achieve publication of the magazine in this country.

With the late J. Y. MacPeake, her managing director, she planned the new periodical, preparing "dummy" issues for months before she was satisfied.

When *Good Housekeeping* was launched it was a success from the first number, and it has made enormous profits over a period of many years. Shortly after its launching MacPeake died, and a new managing director had to be found.

It was at this moment that William Randolph Hearst really stepped into the life of Alice Head. Hearst, American millionaire, newspaper magnate, owner of *Nash's* and *Good Housekeeping*, took a chance. He knew the work she was doing, although he had never met her. From New York he cabled the O.K. on her appointment as managing director.

Thus opened a chapter that some one, some day, will deal with adequately in a longer work than this—a rich, fruity chapter of incredible adventures. The little London woman was caught up into something bizarre and breath-taking.

The success of her magazines continued in an astonishing way, and Alice Head, travelling to America in the business of her publications, met for the first time the man she now refers to as "W.R."

You have to know this man Hearst. You have to know this incredible, money-squandering, big-hearted playboy if you are to understand something of Alice Head's job. We have nothing like him in this country, although Lord Northcliffe—building up his newspapers here when Hearst was creating his in America—must have resembled him strikingly in many ways.

Hearst must always have the best. He must be surrounded by beautiful things—beautiful pictures, beautiful furniture, beautiful efficiency in his workers. And there is nothing so expensive as beauty except in Hollywood, where beautiful people, hating the sight of each other, starve in the streets.

Elsewhere you have to buy beauty. Thirty years

ago, when William Randolph Hearst was painting America yellow with his chain of sensational newspapers, he bought the beautiful efficiency that made them successful. He bought the cleverest writers and the best artists in the country. He bought the sporting people, the politicians, the police. If Hearst wanted a man in his team, he got him. He may have had to bribe, buy, or even steal him, but he got him.

There are head-wagging journalists who remember the wild, gay early days of the Hearst newspapers. Their arteries may be hardened with the drinking that was so beautifully part of those days, but their old heads are full of riotous memories. Hearst gave them all life. In buying exciting life for himself, he gave it in overflowing measure to other people. They shared his purse, his pride in achieving, his passion for the best.

Those days are gone. The Hearst newspapers are still sensational. They are still guided by the master hand of the Great Buyer. But they are a respectable business proposition now, not a wild adventure of youth.

The instinct to Buy lives on. The craving for the best cannot be downed and will not be denied. Hearst, with millions at his command, casts his restless eye about the world like a child in a toyshop. So he buys a range of mountains in California, builds an Italian palace in their midst, and calls it a ranch. Just a ranch. With thirty miles of the Pacific coast belonging to it, magnificent suites of rooms, private "guest houses" hugging the main building on the slopes of the mountains, beautiful swimming pools, a huge banqueting and ballroom, and a zoo.

The instinct is not satisfied. It buys him the whole top floor of a New York hotel for an office, and a
G.W. M

palatial flat on Riverside Drive. It roams farther afield and reminds him that there are castles in England—castles with moats and meadows, with haunted rooms and histories. And in England there is now Alice Maud Head, the quiet, capable, shrewd woman (with whom his friendship has grown and mellowed) to do his buying for him. To be always at his call. To meet his demands. To fill his ranch and his houses with the treasures of an impoverished Europe. To be his ambassador on the spot of all the bargains.

* * * * *

She says to me, looking up from the steak and kidney pie which no millionaire's ambassador should like, but which she seems to enjoy :

"One morning I got a cable telling me to buy St. Donat's Castle. W.R. had seen a picture of it in an advertisement in *Country Life*."

She chuckles her quiet chuckle. She tells me that, although she had herself not seen St. Donat's Castle—that lovely place in Wales now worth about a quarter of a million pounds—she had gone into all the plans and business of the place and bought it within twenty-four hours for a sum that greatly pleased Hearst.

"He has not stayed there," she says, "more than half a dozen times. After his first visit we had the castle almost completely overhauled and modernised. The plans were W.R.'s. The fun of carrying them through was mine."

Electricity was installed in the castle; exquisite panelling was put in; the three bathrooms became twenty-five; silver, furniture and antiques were bought on an extensive scale. Alice Head had the spending of the many thousands of pounds.

"It was strange handling huge sums of money at

first," she says, " I hadn't been used to that sort of thing, as you know. But now . . ."

Now she is one of the most experienced and expert buyers in the world. She knows her W.R.—this likeable American who should have been an Oriental potentate. But sometimes at first he was the tiniest bit bewildering to the girl who had so lately been earning a pound a week.

That time, for example, when he went for a walk in the country not far from St. Donat's and saw a white house standing on a cliff. A sudden loneliness took possession of him. It was his morning for wanting white houses standing on cliffs. He gazed wistfully at it.

" I think we should buy that," he said.

Alice Head was firm.

" Oh, we've got enough houses just now, W.R."

He gave in to her. But with what reluctance she could tell from his eyes.

Or that other time when, staying at a Californian hotel, he was annoyed with the beds, and bought the hotel to put them right.

And that awful time when the cable came from him telling her to go to a certain number in Tottenham Court Road and look over a pair of giraffes that W.R. wanted for his zoo in California.

" My God ! " I whisper to her, " what do you know about giraffes ? What did you do ? "

" Put on my hat and went down to the shop in Tottenham Court Road," she replies calmly.

I am silently wondering what *I* should do if some one told me to go and buy a couple of giraffes. What would the chattering actresses around us do ? How does one judge a giraffe ? Does one look for the points one seeks in a horse ? Or a dog ? Or a cow ?

"I walked into the shop," Alice Head is saying, "and asked if they had any nice giraffes that day. But I saw as soon as I got there that there wasn't a four-legged animal in sight. It was a cockatoo shop."

But it was a shop which had found stranger things for Mr. Hearst than giraffes, and the owner actually had a pair of giraffes—in South Africa. Alice Head did not go to South Africa to bring them back. W.R. sent his "circus-master" from California for them, and on her next visit to the ranch, she was taken along to see them by W.R. himself.

But there are more serious occasions in her life. Hearst, in his off moments, may be the millionaire playboy, but his serious political policy is no light-hearted thing. And she plays many important roles in it.

* * * * *

We have reached the coffee stage, and—forgetting—I offer cigarettes. Alice Head does not smoke. She drinks very little. Seldom at all during the day, occasionally in the evenings, rather joyously when she is with friends and away from the job.

She makes one or two trips a year to America.

"I enjoy playing about on board ship," she confesses.

"Of course it's a dream of a story," I say to her.

"Mine? I suppose so."

"The little obscure girl playing around with millionaires, living in a castle, travelling in luxury liners. Success! It's every girl's dream come true."

Yet she hates parties. She likes quiet. She likes to have time to herself to read the hundreds of books and manuscripts she has to examine in the course of

a year's work. She likes to have dinner and a quiet evening with a friend. Three nights a week she is in bed by ten o'clock.

She is getting used to the life now. It was a puzzle at first, and sometimes—even now—she wonders whether it's all as true as she knows it to be. But her mother wondered more.

Of good, typical, Baptist stock, her mother was sorely puzzled. Her nonconformist world had scarcely prepared her for this strange millionaire and his stranger whims. Her scheme of things had no place for a money-squandering man who bought castles he had never seen; who wanted her daughter to buy him giraffes; who entertained lavishly and wandered about the world; who bought up hotels when he was dissatisfied with the beds; who had to get what he wanted the moment he wanted it; who had the power to do—and undo so much.

All her training and experience and instinct disbelieved in such a person.

"Well," said Alice Head to her mother one day, at Waterloo Station, "here is the ogre. Would you like to meet him?"

Her mother met him. She looked into his eyes, heard him speak his slow, deliberate, almost biblical speech, grasped his hand, and was enchanted by his friendly smile.

Hours afterwards, still shaking her puzzled head:

"I'd never have believed it, Alice. Never have believed it."

* * * * *

We walk out of the Ivy. Her car is waiting for us. "Buy yourself a car," W.R. had told Alice Head, and she had bought—no, not a Rolls Royce; that is what makes her different—an Austin.

We step in. A beautiful rug is tucked around her knees.

She says—oh, perfect finishing touch :

“ W.R. had this made from the foxes on his ranch.”

DODIE SMITH

IT was the end of the world for her. She lay on the small bed sobbing out her heart, and her life lay about her like the wreckage of her own hopes. Surely there could never again be days of sunshine, or laughter, or quick, tremulous hope in the heart. After this night, to which all moments of her existence had seemed to lead, there would not even be faith. There was a future. It stretched ahead of her now like a dark road, but it was a future peopled by ghosts.

The man and woman in the room with her exchanged troubled glances. The man moved uncomfortably over the floor as men do at such times. The woman tried to do vague things with the shower-like masses of flowers that were to have crowned the evening's success, and that instead had turned the home-coming car into a hearse.

Flowers. Flowers. Masses of flowers.

"These orchids . . ." ventured the woman in the room.

"Take them away," she cried from her bed. "Take them away! I don't want them. Please take them away. They make me feel like death."

They tiptoed about the room, hoping to comfort her with the feeble words that so inadequately cope with doom. She did not hear them, and if she had they would have meant little to her at the moment.

And presently they took themselves off, answering her entreaties by carrying the orchids downstairs again to the waiting car. The orchids she had worn against her breast, hoping for success. Take them away.

Please take them away. Leave me alone. Leave me here to go over it all again. Leave me with my failure.

She scarcely heard their receding footsteps. The horn of their car, coldly clear in the midnight air, floated up to her like the last faint hooting of a derisive world. She was alone. The other flowers, gifts from her friends, remained with her in the darkness.

* * * * *

The evening had been born with so much hope. Months before, out of turmoil and toil and a hundred hardships, she had conceived and written her play. It had been accepted by Basil Dean. It was to be put on at a West End theatre.

She had not, of course, been able to believe in her good fortune. When, a long time before, she had been "up against it," living in one room over a bakery in Marylebone, with £1 separating her from bankruptcy as thinly as her walls kept out the heat of the baking ovens, it hadn't seemed possible that one evening in the future she would sit in a London theatre waiting for the curtain to rise on a play written by her.

It had seemed even less possible later, when, anxious for a job, she was forced to address envelopes for a living, that this play of hers would come to life in the mouths of actors and actresses on a London stage; or that half the fashionable world would be drawn together to be stirred by her imagery.

She lay quiet in the dark. They had not been much stirred.

Her memory went back from to-night's failure to earlier failures. She remembered the poor figure she had cut at St. Paul's School, when she had come to London from Manchester, and discovered that it was

almost impossible to be popular unless you were good at games. She had not been good at games. She had been woefully bad at games ; so bad that her one idea on seeing a cricket ball coming in her direction was to get out of its way. She had been lonely and alone, and in escape she had dreamed of the theatre, of which she had always been passionately fond, and her desk and exercise books were full of theatre programmes and photographs.

Naturally, on leaving school, she had attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. It seemed to her now, tossing on her bed, that just as naturally she had been a failure. A job in musical comedy, after the Academy, was not her idea of a glorious offering to the drama, but it was a job. And it was the theatre. It was the world of make-believe. It was the escape from reality. So far from reality, in fact, that she played the part of a dashing American girl in a grey riding habit and a bowler hat. The habit fastened with hooks which unfastened at the most important moments, and the bowler hat was so large that it came down over her eyes. She had not been a conspicuous success.

After that, although she was on the stage for a number of years, she made one failure after another, and the balance in the bank grew smaller and smaller. It was difficult to keep going. The stage was a blind alley for her, offering nothing ; and she had little knowledge, and no experience, of any other occupation. She knew that she could not act ; she knew also that she could not do anything else. And so down and down. Down to a single room in Marylebone, and to any job she could find, from stringing beads together to addressing envelopes. Down to twenty shillings away from starvation.

Her sobs ceased. A tremble of gratitude fluttered her heart. She was remembering that in those other days, when everything had seemed lost, Fate had suddenly saved her. A crazy man in a furnishing shop in Tottenham Court Road had given her a job ; a man with so little comprehension that he had engaged her in his toy and pictures department. A crazy fellow. Or perhaps a man with a touch of genius. A man called Ambrose Heal. He had known—she had been at pains to tell him—that she knew nothing about toys, and little about pictures. He had laughed at her, put her on the firm's pay-roll, and watched her develop into an able buyer. Her run of failures seemed to be definitely at an end.

She remembered, pressing the scrap of wet handkerchief into her eyes, how she had been sent to Leipzig to buy toys for this firm of Heal's ; how she had seized the opportunity to take a holiday in the Austrian Tyrol ; how there had been born the idea of her play—the idea of a little unknown English schoolmistress, as lonely as herself, coming to the Tyrol for a holiday, and falling in love with the handsome innkeeper who was, unknown to her, already married.

The idea took life. She carried it back to London, and in her spare time wrote her play. She could not act, but perhaps she could write. Perhaps that contact with the stage which she had always craved would be brought about in this way. All her ambitions flamed again within her as she wrote. This play *must* be good ; it *must* be a success. The stage had given her suffering and disappointment before. It would make amends now !

And the theatre seemed to understand that, too. The play was taken by Basil Dean. A surge of

high hope flowed through her. The bleak past was behind ; there would be no more single rooms in Marylebone, no more days of dull disappointment. She had always known that her life was in the theatre ; it was coming true now.

* * * * *

She was very still in the dark, stabbed by the memory of a few hours before. Some one had foolishly planned supper at the Savoy after the opening performance of the play. It was to have been a supper of gay congratulations ; it had been a funeral feast.

They had tried to pretend that everything had gone as well as it should. They had smiled thinly at each other in the strained atmosphere, and when they laughed there was in the laughter the gaiety of desperation. They were all wishing that they were in bed and that the evening had never happened.

She had sat silent among the forced chatter, humiliated by one more defeat in her life, remembering the crowded theatre and the uproar. Not the uproar of popular acclaim, but the uproar of back-chat between stalls and gallery, the indignant calls for "silence" from the stalls, and the jeering cat-calls from the gods.

It had been a nightmare. A restless section of the audience had imposed its ill-humour on the whole house, and there were constant interruptions. The play, slowed down in performance by twenty more minutes than had been planned in rehearsal, seemed to drag through the evening. Her friends had offered their sympathy at first, and then grown silent. There was nothing they could say. She knew everything already.

"A flop," the knowing ones had murmured to each other after the final curtain and the hubbub. "A flop," muttered the "knockers" as they hurried down the corridors into the night air. "A flop," whispered her heart as she accepted the congratulations of her circle of acquaintances; "another flop."

They had tried to rally her at supper. They had tried to pretend, as they had pretended so many times before at other failures, that everything was all right, and that that was how audiences usually behaved when they were appreciative. She had smiled and accepted their assurances. Good people. Good friends. They were as disappointed as she. They were more involved than she. Some of them perhaps had put their money into the play. All of them had put their hopes. She had only put her life.

At last it was over. They had piled up the car with flowers whose fragrance was a mockery, stood bareheaded when she said good-bye, as they would stand decently bareheaded at the passing of any cortège, and watched her fade quickly away into the night.

Her brief hour of hope. It was over now. She lay on the bed in the darkness. The theatre was finished with her. It had no use for her in any capacity. It was the end of the world for her.

She fell asleep at last, and woke in the morning to read in the newspapers that her play "Autumn Crocus" had won the enthusiastic approval of the critics, and to realise dimly that she was at the beginning of a success that has since carried her to independence and luxury.

* * * * *

Sitting in the sitting-room of her Dorset Square flat, and recalling that wonderful next day after the disastrous evening before, she says gaily:

"And I was asked out to lunch that day, and had no orchids! I had given them all away. Wherever I went for a fortnight after that, I saw my orchids being worn by my friend!"

She could not afford the thought then. She can now. She lives in this lovely flat, so representative of the present times in which she has found success that scarcely an object in it could have been bought twenty years ago. It is as modern as that. It spells To-day for Dodie Smith, and to-day is pay day.

She hands me tea. Her slim fingers curl upwards at the tips, and I remember that in her early days on the stage her performance was once spoilt by some one in the audience calling out: "Look at her hands." There is something fairy-like and unreal about her hands.

There is something unreal and ethereal in Dodie Smith herself, in this room of black and white and iron grey. There is no colour anywhere in the furnishings. There is colour only in Dodie Smith, so small a woman that she seems to be a little girl in a big arm-chair. She wears a red dress, and I smile as I think of the one-time picture buyer being able to make her own pictures now with vivid living people against grey-white backgrounds. I smile only because of that, for she wears her coloured dress as quietly and as modestly as she wears her success.

We know each other well enough for me to say:

"I used to be puzzled, when I was much younger, about the concern of lots of novels and plays with that Fate Worse Than Death which overtook so many people. What could be worse than death, I wondered? It was only when I had lived in London for many years, and had met many successful writers and

actors and so on, that I knew that the Fate could be nothing less than swollen head. The thing you haven't got."

She smiles. The thought suggests another one to her, and she goes off at a tangent :

" I had a maid, soon after my success with 'Autumn Crocus,' who thought I should live up to my new rôle in life by having cocktails in my bath before dinner. She was all for the gay, grand life. I think that was because of her earlier training, for she had always by some chance or other served women who were generally maintained by other women's husbands. She was very concerned about me. It seemed odd to her that I hadn't a steady man somewhere in the background, collecting my bills and saving me a lot of worry. It didn't seem *right* to her. I had to tell her once that I actually preferred life my way, and that I had never been kept by any one. 'Never mind, ma'am,' she said with infinite sympathy, 'there's always hope!'"

In this inconsequential way we loiter over tea. It is easy to talk in this pleasant room with its dead white walls, without a single picture, and its dark ebonised desk and tables, and its flower vases of black glass, and its silver lustre candlesticks. It is easy to talk to Dodie Smith, small bright mass of colour opposite me ; easy to listen to the quiet voice that says, in answer to my " You ought to be able to work in a flat like this " :

" I had a terrible time in this place writing my second play 'Service.' It nearly drove me mad. I started it a dozen times and tore up all my beginnings. Nothing seemed to go right with it, and I was so anxious. You see, I just *had* to write a good play for my second."

"I know. To prove that you weren't only a one-play merchant."

Very quietly: "I was so sick of all the talk of 'shop-girl's fluke success.' I had to show them that it wasn't just a lucky break, and that I could do as well again, if not better. You know."

I know. I know the things *they* said about R. C. Sherriff and 'Journey's End.' It wasn't a play; it was a personal experience. He was so near to it that he just couldn't help writing it. It wrote itself, in fact. There was nothing else in Sherriff but that one war experience. They told him so even while they were encouraging him to sit down and write something else so that they could laugh at him. It must have been an agony to Sherriff to visualise the faces of his "knockers" every time he sat down to tackle his next play 'Badger's Green'; an agony as he anticipated the reception of his exquisite novel 'Fortnight in September.' Sherriff couldn't do it, *they* said, but Sherriff did. Dodie Smith couldn't do it again, *they* said. The little shop girl had got away with a personal experience also. Fallen in love with an inn-keeper in the Tyrol when she was there on a holiday. Couldn't help writing the play. It wrote itself, in fact. Wait till you see her next effort! Have you heard she's started another one a dozen times, and it won't come right? What did *we* tell you?

"It was an even worse experience than 'Autumn Crocus'—waiting for the first night of 'Service,'" she says now. "But it was worth it."

"The price of success."

She sighs a little.

"I never feel I'm really successful. I suppose that's because, having been so near the edge before, one can always visualise it happening to one again. You

never get a sense of security. And, of course, you always seem to be spending more than you ought to."

I have heard it so often before.

She goes on :

" I used to think that if I had only three pounds a week *certain* in life, how happy I should be ! Now——" she makes her little gesture with her curly fingers. " Now I am independent. I have more money than I ever thought I should have. I work when I like, do what I like, go where I like. Once a week I go in for an afternoon to Heal's, and have a real gossip with every one. Just to keep in touch. The girl who was my assistant has got my job, and she is very happy."

You will find something of the secret of Dodie Smith in these words " just to keep in touch." Certainly something of the secret of her success. She is always in touch ; always in touch with that humanity which she pictures on the stage. Her men and women are the ordinary human men and women that you rub shoulders with in any crowd, in any tram, in any tube. She knows their hopes and fears because she has lived them ; she is at one with their dreams and desires because she has experienced them. Her oneness with her audience is her greatest strength.

" Autumn Crocus " reeked with sentimentality. " Service " in parts was unblushingly slushy. " I must confess," said St. John Ervine, " that I have seldom felt so put out as I was when a rainbow appeared in the last act." And how many of us agreed with him ! But how right Dodie Smith was ! She is much nearer to the hearts of the ordinary people than most of her fellow playwrights ; and certainly nearer than any of the critics. She knows what people want, and she has

the ability to give it to them with complete sincerity and conviction.

She will write many more successful plays. She must know in herself that she will, but she has in her the caution of the North, and of the experienced. Her sufferings have left their mark; her success has scarcely scarred her.

She does not yet believe that she has "got away with it." There are always snags.

"The first night of 'Autumn Crocus' in New York was almost as bad as in London," she says. "Francis Lederer fell twice off the mountain-side, once almost landing among the orchestra. And some people—very famous people indeed—walked out before the end of the play. It wasn't at all a reassuring experience."

The past seems to count more with her than the future. She never talks about what she is going to do with her life, but she will frequently mention unpleasant memories like the Francis Lederer falls. It is as if she were saying to herself: "All this isn't true yet; it's only a dream. Remember the room over the bakery in Marylebone. That was reality. This is an interlude between realities. Don't lose your grip."

There is not much fear of Dodie Smith doing that. She is one of the people who deserve success if only by virtue of the way they have borne it. There is nothing "high hat" about her, no wild throwing of flowers to the winds in high exultation. She is not gambling on the future. She says, a little wistfully, that she has not got many of the things she wants; she has not got a country cottage, or a car. That's Dodie Smith's apple-sauce. It's her salve to her puritan conscience that counsels caution.

Photograph by
BASSANO



AMY JOHNSON

AMY MOLLISON

LONG before I met Amy Mollison—and when she was still Amy Johnson—she was the means of separating me from one of my best friends. At that time I shared a flat with a man who was working hard in his spare time to persuade a sceptical flying instructor that he was capable of controlling a machine in the air. The instructor remained obdurate ; my friend remained hopeful. In the evenings he would come back from the flying field, and regale me with tales of his intrepid adventures under dual control.

I could stand that. It was pleasant to relax in an arm-chair and have all the thrills and risks of flying by proxy. I would close my eyes while he demonstrated, with the aid of a hard chair and a walking stick, the beauties of banking and diving. I would even pretend to be his passenger on occasion, and we went for all kinds of gay imaginary air journeys about this time. I nearly took up flying myself.

But Amy Johnson shattered all that. She did not know, when she set out for Australia on her lone hop, that there were people like my friend in the world. If she had stayed at home I might have been sharing the flat with that man still. I might have been listening to-night to his declaration that before the year was out he would be flying solo. But Amy did not know. She made her flight ; made history ; and some one else made a gramophone record telling the world all about it. It was that gramophone record which wrecked my home.

My friend brought it back to our comfortable little

place as soon as it was issued. Of course, like every one else, he was an Amy fan. It was Amy morning, noon and night with him. As he buttered his toast at breakfast he raved about Amy and read aloud from his *Daily Mail* such pieces of information about her as were vouchsafed to an eager world. If I met him at lunch, as in moments of great weakness I sometimes did, Amy was served up with the smoked salmon. In the evenings he now played the Amy Johnson record on the gramophone. Not once. Not twice. Just all evening.

I stuck it for a bit. I put up with the melody. I endured the incredible words :

*Amy, wonderful Amy,
I'm proud of the way you flew ;
Believe me, Amy, you cannot blame me
For falling in love with you.*

I felt that friendship had never been so tested in all the history of the world. Ours was a pretty noble attachment, come to think of it, when it could survive a thing like that. But when my demented acquaintance took to singing the song, and chanting the drivelling monologue that went with it ("We are now over Belgium; now here is France . . . Turkey . . ." to incidental national music), I felt that posterity would have to look to some one other than myself for the rôle of the Man Who Endured All for Friendship.

I gave him due warning. Defiantly he flung "*Believe me, Amy, you cannot blame me,*" back into my face. I reminded him sadly that he would have no flying passenger in the evenings if I went. He retorted with a squawking "*proud of the way you flew,*" and turned the handle of the gramophone for a fresh onslaught.

We parted without sadness. Neither of us wavered

in our intention to seek the life we wanted, I peaceful independence, he incredible music. Even as we shook hands he offered to play the wretched thing again for me, as a kind of farewell treat. I felt that Amy—either on a gramophone record or in real life—would never go over very big with me.

* * * * *

We stood at one of the windows in Amy's suite of rooms in Grosvenor House, and looked down on the winding stream of cars in Park Lane. A light summer breeze fanned the silken curtain at the open window. A shimmering haze, which threatened intense heat for the afternoon, hung over Hyde Park. London lay there below us, stretched out lazily in the sunshine. Its drowsy murmur of traffic came softly up to us like the droning of a bee.

The breeze blew in through the open window, cooling our faces. Amy caught the fluttering curtain in her hand and held it absentmindedly while it billowed out like a sail.

"Fun to live here?" I asked. "Like being in an aeroplane, in a way. You're always looking down on traffic and houses and people."

Amy took her eyes off the scene below and turned to me. Sky-blue eyes, matching the same colour of the smart two-piece suit she wore, they were clear and clean and assured. Beneath the yellow hair, and against the brown of her lean face, their blueness was almost startling. Most flyers of my acquaintance have something of that blue in their eyes, but Amy Mollison's eyes are the feature which people who have met her never forget.

She smiled and leaned against the side of the window. Slight, slim, beautifully poised.

"I hadn't thought of it like that, but perhaps you're right. I know that it's fun to come back to this place when I've been away from it for a little while."

The lightest movement of her slim hands as she talked. No movement at all of her head. A suggestion about her of tremendous assurance.

Her eyes went back to the green trees in Hyde Park. Mine strayed beyond her to the room in which we stood. A large modern room, in that large modern hotel, it told me a great deal about Amy Mollison that she might not tell herself.

It is a room that is neither a home nor an office, and yet it is something of both. It is really a landing stage between flights, the common meeting place of the two Mollisons, where plans are made, maps are examined, correspondence is dealt with, friends are entertained, books are read, jazz records are played on the gramophone, odd meals are taken. It is a place to pass through from one appointment to another, to linger in for a few minutes before going out to the theatre, to come back to afterwards in the small hours of the morning, and have a last drink in before retiring.

It seems at first glance to be full of bright red leather arm-chairs and model aeroplanes and flowers, but it has other things. There is a dark-haired, smartly dressed girl secretary at a table, busily typing letters. From time to time she answers the telephone, and she appears always to know what to do and what to say, for she never interrupts Amy Mollison. There is a large case of beer under a table against the wall, the largest case of beer I have ever seen. Some of the bottles in it are empty, some are full. There are innumerable bottles and glasses on top of a cabinet—

bottles containing whisky, brandy, soda water, lime juice, vermouth, gin, and the usual other liquids that have to be produced by people whose dozens of friends land in on them at all hours of the day and night. There is an open gramophone on a sofa at the far end of the room, and dozens of records—modern dance records mostly—are stacked carelessly against it. There are little tables of books and magazines, with books as varied and modern as *The Beauty of Flight* and *The Stag at Eve*.

A strange mixture of a room. The Mollisons pass through it, full of hope, on their way to the ends of the earth, and return to it full of triumph. Beyond it, in the passage, is their bedroom and dressing-room and bathroom. The suite is their home—the modern, impermanent home of people whose calling makes them supersitious of looking at the day after tomorrow.

Amy, turning her head away from the view and looking straight at me, said :

“ I live for to-day.”

It was the keynote to the room. It was the attitude of the aviator. Nothing permanent, nothing lasting. Why make any plans beyond the next flight ?

“ Why tempt Fate ? ” she asked lightly. “ Jim and I make no plans. We have, in a sense, no future. I mean, we have no future drawn up in our mind’s eye. We have a lot to do in the present, and we try to do it. We can’t indulge the luxury of thinking too far ahead.” She looked down again on the traffic in Park Lane and repeated : “ There’s such a lot to do first.”

“ But what ultimately ? ” I asked. “ What comes out of it all in the end ? A home ? Babies ? ”

She shrugged her slight shoulders and laughed.

"That's much too far ahead. There's the fun of living and doing things first."

"You seem to be very happy about it."

"*Happy!*" Her blue eyes shone. Her voice inflected upward. If she had been an American girl she would have said: "You're telling me!" in the same tone. "I'm very happy. I'm living the kind of life that is just right for me. I can do what I like—almost—just when I like to do it. I can go places, travel, play, do what I like."

There was no exultation in the voice, only a quiet satisfaction; the satisfaction of the matured woman who knows what she wants to do and is not sidetracked by time-wasting diversions.

"At first it was awful. I didn't know what had happened to me. I didn't fly to Australia to win fame; I went because I was made that way and had always wanted to travel and pioneer. I get that from my father, who has Viking blood in him. I got it also from all the Norsemen and Viking stories I gorged myself on when I was a kid. I've always wanted adventure, to be up and doing and seeing the world. It gives me an ache even now to think of the places that I'll never be able to see in the world."

The silk curtain fluttered out of her hand and she caught it and held it fast. I waited for her to continue. The secretary behind us went quietly on with her work.

"But when I had made my first sensational flight, and all this began"—a slight movement of Amy's arm to indicate her new life as represented by the large hotel room—"I was completely lost. I didn't know how to handle things. I wanted to get away from it all. It was new to me, and very frightening. I hadn't sought it in the least. The last thing I thought

when I set out for Australia was that I was dropping out completely from the life I had always known, and was beginning something entirely fresh. Yet that is really what happened to me. I left this country as an unknown woman. The public had never heard of me. I hadn't done too much flying and certainly never anything of a spectacular nature."

She had only been in the air in her spare time, and had never flown more than 140 miles at one time, had never even flown across the Channel, when she set out for Australia. She had been a typist, shopgirl, and children's companion—the latter job taken on so that she could earn some extra money to learn flying. Her name had never been in a newspaper.

"And when I arrived in Australia the deluge burst upon me. I didn't know what to do about it. Of course it upset me." The frank eyes held mine for a moment. "It was all so new and bewildering. Thousands of letters and telegrams poured in. The demands made on me to open exhibitions and bazaars and concerts—well, you wouldn't believe it. People asked me to write newspaper articles, to write books, to write autographs. I was invited to parties and dances and theatres. An entirely new social phase opened up in front of me. I had seldom before been able to get what I really desired out of life; now, it seemed, I could have everything I wanted, and a lot that I didn't. It was overwhelming, and I think I went under a little with it. I did not realise then that that kind of life—just like every kind of life—has to be organised. I had nobody to turn to, and the whole business appalled me. Now . . ."

She smiled. The secretary rose in the room behind us and went to another telephone. Softly and authoritatively she spoke into the mouthpiece, replaced it on

its bracket, went back to the mass of correspondence on her table.

"Now I'm on top of it," Amy finished. "My life is organised. I know where I am. Things fit in to their right places. I'm protected when I ought to be protected, and I'm available when I want to be available. I take life in my stride, and I'm living just as I've always wanted to."

She went back for a moment to the earlier days :

"Then I was so shy and sensitive and nervous, and the last thing in the world that I sought were crowds of people breaking in on me. I've always been terribly shy. It was death at first to have to face so many strangers, and to do so many things in public. I had carried out a sort of private dream of my own, and woke to find it everybody's property. It took a bit of getting used to."

She ha got used to it. She stood in her smart sky-blue suit against the window, beautifully master of herself, and I could imagine her handling any situation.

Tr-rr-ing went the telephone behind us, and the girl secretary dealt with some one else trying to reach Amy Mollison. I thought of the time when Amy had answered the summons of a telephone every day in a solicitor's office, and hated it. She had never settled to the routine of the office ; she had even made her own hours in the place. Always she has been a rebel, or a pioneer, or any other word you like to describe a person discontented with their lot and determined to carry through their own purpose. She was a rebel as a child in Hull, and was at eight preparatory schools before she had reached the age of twelve ! She was a pioneer after she got her B.A. at Sheffield University, and came to London to carve out her own career. She was a history-maker when, after learning to fly,

she worked in the shops as a mechanic and was the first woman to obtain a ground engineer's certificate.

She was an impatient dreamer when she took infinite pains to make the acquaintance of Sir Sefton Brancker and through him was introduced to Lord Wakefield, the "father" of so many air flights and motor car record attempts. She was a woman seeing herself fulfilled when she took off from Croydon on her first long lone flight. She was a world sensation when she arrived nineteen days later in Australia.

Amy is as interested as I am in the reasons for people doing things. She can discuss her own achievements and aspirations as objectively as if they were the achievements and aspirations of some one else, and for a minute or two at that window we lapsed into the modern jargon of "complexes."

"It's not only that I wanted to escape from everyday life," she said. "I don't think I had an 'escape' complex. I know all about that modern theory of the sensitive, rebellious child, shy in the company of people, who dreams of doing great things in which he comes out in the limelight, and finally justifies himself by doing something spectacular and imposing himself on a world that he has hitherto been afraid of. There might have been something of that in me, of course. But I honestly don't think so. I wanted to *fly*. That was all. Flying was not, in my mind, a means to an end. It was a glorious end in itself. It seemed to me to represent all that was beautiful and ambitious in life. I never thought of what flying would bring me. I only wanted to fly."

"I saved up my money to that end. I took odd jobs to help me along. When I went up in the air for the first time I was told that I was hopeless. I had not been able to follow my instructor's directions at all.

He was terribly impatient with me. You see, he did not know that the flying helmet he had given me was miles too big for me, and that the ear-phones came down to my chin. I scarcely heard one word he said. No wonder I was hopeless."

The blue eyes flashed as she laughed.

"But when I could fly, naturally I wanted to know everything about an aeroplane. So I went into the workshops and learned the game there. And when I knew all about that, naturally I wanted to be up and doing. At last I could go into the air with confidence in myself. For the first time I visualised myself going off to the far-off places I had always wanted to visit. That was all there was to it. As a child I had dreamed of swooping down, like a Viking, on some lonely spot on the map. As a grown woman I was going to see the dream come true. The attendant hulabaloo to the feat was something I had never anticipated.

"So I don't think it's an escape complex. The air is my home." She said the words simply and sincerely.

"In the air I feel soothed and at peace. Even on these long-distance flights, when I should be straining along with my machine, I suppose, I am soothed and at peace. The loneliness of the air—or rather, the so-called loneliness of the air—answers to something in me. I don't know of any greater happiness than to be sitting in the cockpit of a machine thousands of feet above the earth—and above your fellow creatures—sailing through space to some unknown and exciting goal. And the farther the goal the better I like it.

"But I never wanted fame. I never sought money. When I see my name in the headlines of newspapers I never believe that it is me. It always seems to be some one else, for I don't feel at all that I'm the

person so much fuss is being made about. I feel as I always felt about flying. It's fun to have all the money you want, of course. I like doing new things. Money permits me to do them. It allows me to carry out a scheme of life that is right for me. This, for instance"—a wave of the hand to the room behind, and to the view in front of us, and to the Park below—"but money for its own sake never appealed to me, and does not now. It would not worry me if I lost all I have. It would not worry Jim. We are workers, and shall always be workers in the right sense of the word. We want to go on flying."

Tr-rr-ing went the telephone again. The secretary spoke into the mouthpiece. More invitations, I thought. Another secretary of Something or Other wanting the presence of Amy Mollison at the opening of his pet project? Another charity seeking aid? Another newspaper anxious for an interview? Another autograph-hunter arrived in London?

Jim Mollison came into the room, joined us at the window, and shook hands. Amy's first spectacular flight, which brought so much into her life, brought also this man who is now her husband. He piloted the air liner that took her from Brisbane to Sydney, and in the course of the flight sent her a note from the cockpit asking whether he could have a dance with her that evening at the party in Sydney to be given in her honour. Amy replied that he could. In a short time he sent her another note asking if he could have two dances. Amy replied that he could.

That was how it began. But he did not dance with her at all that evening. Probably he could not get near her. Amy's new, wonderful, bewildering social life had begun. She was hemmed in on every side by people eager to entertain her. The young air pilot did

not get to her side. He did not dance with Amy Johnson. But he had started something that marched inevitably to that window in Grosvenor House that morning, and to the three of us standing there. These flyers are like that.

He stayed chatting for a few minutes, reminded Amy of one more demand on her time for a lunch party, and went away. We moved from the window. I offered Amy a cigarette. She does not smoke much. "About one a month. Two if I feel reckless and dissipated!" She does not drink. "Used to—a little. Not now. Older and wiser!" She keeps herself in excellent condition. You can tell that by the look of her. You can always tell that by the look of any woman. "No fun feeling a mess!" she said. She rides, swims, walks, drives a fast car. Loathes any one else driving. It makes her feel nervous. Goes to late parties with discrimination now. "You can't stay up all night and do a job of work." She has cut out most of the calls for late night amusement. She believes in plenty of sleep. "This is a job," she says; "everything is a job in life and has to be tackled the right way. Staying up all night wouldn't be the right way." At first it was fun. But . . . "older and wiser now!"

And that's Amy Mollison. Not a bit the harum-scarum "reckless flying girl." Matured; organised; on top of life. Knows what she wants to do and does it. Slim, smart, composed. Incredibly blue eyes. Small brown face. Yellow hair brushed from the right side and falling over her left ear. Large round pearl ear-rings. No other jewellery except the ring on the third finger on her left hand. Efficiency about every feature of her, efficiency stamped in every movement of her.

When she rose from her chair to see me to the door, I thought suddenly of a blue Moth plane.

* * * * *

I telephoned to my old friend asking if he had still the Amy Johnson gramophone record.

"Of course I have!" he declared. "Would you like me to play it to you over the telephone?"

"Not quite."

"Sing it, perhaps?"

"Not even that!"

In a moment of great generosity, he said:

"Jimmy, I shall give it to you! As a present!"

These flyers—and would-be flyers!

"I just want to tell you," I said, "that I've met Amy Mollison. I still think it's the hell of a gramophone record. And the sentiment's rotten. But you know something about flying, and I think I can appreciate your adoration. I just wanted you to know that. She's pretty good."

"Pretty good!" he snorted. For a moment there was silence. Then suddenly his incredible voice crackled in song along the telephone line: "*Believe me, Amy, you cannot blame me for falling in . . .*"

I put down the receiver.



Photograph
by
DOROTHY
WILDING

ROSITA FORBES

ROSITA FORBES

*"Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hills."*

SHE was eight cylinder long before there were eight-cylinder cars ; she is twelve cylinder now that there are. She works on all cylinders all the time ; with her eyes, her mouth, her slim, beautiful hands. She talks brightly, animatedly, intelligently. She is incessantly active, painfully restless, vivacious to a point that leaves you limp.

Her darting, switching mind, interrupting her own speech to project some fresh idea into the conversation, burns till you can feel the cold flame of it. Her fingers speak, every strand of her waved brown hair speaks ; even her legs—surely the longest and slimmest legs in London—seem to speak as she crosses them in her carefully careless way.

She says :

"My dear, I have a face like a suet pudding and eyes like an overfed poodle's."

I am not her dear, and the other statement is as inaccurate. But I have been her angel also on occasion, in the good company of the scores of men and women who share her friendship.

That is Rosita. She "dears" and "angels" and "blesses" you all through a conversation. It is alarming at first ; it is charming later ; it would become boring if you did not appreciate how essential a part it is of her psychological make-up.

She has invited me to see her new house, a stone's-

throw from the Marble Arch. I have come eagerly and with considerable anticipation. I remember stories of sea captains who, on quitting the service, build themselves houses like ships so that they shall feel at home in their retirement ; of big-game hunters who live solitarily in a hut in the trees ; of Generals whose homes are filled with camp beds.

Rosita has been more out of England than in it. She has travelled all over the world, been burned and blistered on a dozen deserts ; her feet have walked on spots that were ignorant blanks on the map. What sort of home has she built for herself ? A snugger ? A warm, cosy barrier against the outside world that has given her so much happy hardship ?

I cannot yet tell, for we are still sitting in the room to which I was shown when I arrived, and I am sipping my sherry preparatory to lunch, and Rosita is talking, talking, talking. The words bubble out of her. They ought to be foolish and meaningless, they come so fast. They are as bright and intelligent as the brain that projects them.

I seize a moment to say of the room :

"I'm rather surprised. It's not a bit like you."

It is dark and, unlighted on this damp winter day, almost depressing. She uncoils her long legs, rises, switches on the light.

The room improves tremendously. It is old-fashionedly cosy, with some fine wall panelling. But it is still not Rosita Forbes.

"It's Arthur's," she explains. Colonel Arthur McGrath is her husband. "One part of the house remains his. This is his library. He has had his bedroom and bathroom also done his own way." She laughs. "I'll show you later."

Better and better. A touch of mystery. Is the

Rosita part of the house so terrific that these rooms have resisted it, standing up like outposts against the unknown?

Lunch, served in an impressive black and red dining-room, begins to confirm my theory that Rosita is confounding previous hardship with present luxury. Has she often starved (and she has)? Then let there be elegant food now. Has she lived on dead camel and locusts? Then let us have poached eggs served inside jacketed potatoes. On sea-worms grilled till they tasted like spinach? A dish of delicious sweetbreads is being offered to us. On octopus and dead horse? The cheese soufflé is the lightest that has ever melted in my mouth.

And all through lunch she talks. But never about her own adventures. You can get Rosita to talk of other travellers and explorers—there is one French woman she will praise for hours at a stretch; you can even coax her to discuss the relative merits of deserts, if deserts have any merits. But you will seldom persuade her to enlarge upon her own excursions.

She talks now of the air people, those people who take off at dawn from Croydon and are lunching on Broadway the following day. And although she does not mention their lightning success and popular acclamation in relation to her own travels, I feel that I am being permitted to see something of the inevitable envy of all desert crossers. The natural envy of the older generation in all branches of life.

How easy it must seem to Rosita and the score of other pioneers who have burned and blistered their way for months across the arid wastes. How easy to get into the cockpit of a petrol-driven machine and endure it for thirty hours. How easy—and how swift the recognition—compared to the long-drawn-out caravan,

out of touch with civilisation, stumbling forward into the sunrise.

It is the envy of all adventurers who see change in their own generation, but I am seeing a new phase of it. It is the envy of the war-time soldier for the new soldier of to-day who has such a "cushy" time. It is the envy of the mother for the modern wife with her labour-saving kitchen. It is the camel mind jealous of the Moth.

It does not worry Rosita much. I feel, watching her gay face, that with another desert crawler at this table instead of myself, she might even say: "These poor air people; what they are missing!" and proceed on an Arabian Nights pow-wow of endless nights in the open when "the first stars swung up like flowers in a bed of indigo."

She breaks off from the discussion. Her mind pierces into another topic.

"My dear," she says, "do you want to hear a perfectly libellous story?"

The man-servant in the room withdraws so coincidentally that I exclaim:

"Have you trained him so well that he even goes out at the right moments?"

We laugh, and she tells me the story, which isn't really so libellous, and we wander out from the dining-room.

She is all a-twitter to show me her house, and I stand in the wide hall following with my eyes the stairway that fades vastly away toward the sky. There are wrought-iron leopards on it, changing their slinky shapes as the stairs go upward, sleepy leopards as the stairway nears the bedrooms.

My eyes come down and are attracted to an oil painting on the wall. Rosita touches a switch and a

concealed lamp over the canvas reveals her in a blue-robed pose that holds all the resignation of the desert. It is at this moment that, talking of the picture, she says laughingly :

" I have a face like a suet pudding and eyes like an overfed poodle's."

We don't discuss that point. I am, indeed, scarcely listening. Rosita knows that her description makes a good phrase. That is all. There is nothing to justify it. Nothing, that is, but an inferiority complex in this very bright woman which few people suspect.

My eyes wander up again into the vastness. At my side, she says :

" Everything that you see has been built into this house. I bought the house, gutted it completely, leaving only the outer shell. Then I had it built as I wanted it."

And I know, as she speaks, that she has built herself not a home, but another beautiful desert.

" It cost a lot of money," she confesses, " but it is worth it."

Her tent in the waste land of London ! We go from spacious room to spacious room. They are all lofty and airy and hard and bright and cold ; and as Rosita's long slim figure strides across the floor, I know that she is striding across a continent.

" This is where I work," she says.

It is as modern as the Sahara. It is a great, empty room of black and silver. There are cool touches of green. There is a small modern desk with a silver modern chair beside it. There are acres of space. A very lovely room. It is like a beautiful, cold woman. Easy to look at, but awful to live with.

Rosita shivers slightly.

"Let's go into Arthur's room," she says. "It's warmer there."

My heart goes out to Arthur as we stand with our backs against his fire.

"This is really a very jolly room," I say enthusiastically.

Rosita rubs her hands together in happy comfort. They are the loveliest hands I have ever seen. Long, soft, delightful to watch. And when they grip yours they grip like a man's.

"I like it too," she agrees. "Now what about the rest of the place?"

We leave Arthur's fire. Reluctantly. We plunge into the wide hall. We climb the stairs, touching the cold, dead, frisking leopards on the way. We are climbing a mountain to Rosita's bedroom under the stars.

Yes, we avoid the drawing-room on the next floor and go right to the top of the stairway. She wants to keep that drawing-room to the last. I know it. It is the *pièce de resistance*. Perhaps there will be a real touch of home about it.

She says, pausing on the threshold of her bedroom:

"I wonder what you will think of it."

She is full of girlish enthusiasm, like a child prattling an anticipatory "there!" She even stretches out a hand to lead me into the enchanted cave.

And I am not really afraid of this room. After all, she must have planned the ideal sleeping place, dreamed of the perfect resting couch, when she was enduring greatest discomfort on her travels.

I follow her into the room. I stand just inside the door, seeing out of the corner of my eye the eager expression on her face. She is hoping I'll like it. And I am remembering that in her time Rosita has

slept on a sloping shelf of rock above the cave city of Petra in the Hedjaz ; on a table in a Tongan shed ; on a native mat in Fiji ; on an opium couch in Siam ; on desert sands in Africa and Arabia. She has sought slumber in the ammunition wagon of a Chinese troop-train ; in an armoured car in Palestine ; on the decks of innumerable junks, sampans and dhows ; on the earthen floors of countless huts, stables and caves.

And now, hundreds of miles away from it all, she cannot escape it. She has made herself a bedroom of frozen beauty. It is the troop-train wagon modernised ; it is the Tongan shed table laid for tea ; it is one of her stables à la Heal.

It must have cost a young fortune. The walls are silver-panelled mirrors, the floor is cold black marble. Your shoes rattle against it as you cross from the door. There are green touches in the chairs, and only in the concealed lighting in the ceiling is there the flush of warming gold.

In this cool wilderness there is a low divan, as near to the hard floor as Rosita can get it. It seems out of place in this gilded room. You get the absurd fancy that perhaps it has been put here because they are spring-cleaning in another part of the house. Poor little bed, it will be taken back to its proper quarters later !

" But you don't sleep here," I protest.

She laughs at me.

" Of course I do."

I see the two of us multiplied in the mirrored walls. The room seems crowded with men and women. Men and women imprisoned in a block of ice.

" But it's damnably cold," I say.

Rosita shivers.

" Of course it isn't ! "

I gaze about me. Again, very, very beautiful. Like everything else in this house. And there are people who suggest that Rosita Forbes does not really do all the adventurous things she says. If they saw this beautiful bedroom their slanders would be silenced.

She says behind me :

" How do you like the lights at the bed ? "

They shine through little golden doors on either side of the divan. We cross to examine them. Rosita opens one to show me the lamp and a tiny recess for hiding things. There is nothing hidden. She leans across and opens the other.

My eyes chuckle at the sight. The one human touch in this bedroom is to be found behind that little golden door. Thank God, I think happily, that Rosita takes Bemax at night, and not brimstone.

* * * * *

More black in the bathroom ; black and green.

" What complexes you've got," I taunt her.

" I know I've got a terrific inferiority complex," she says gaily—and she has ; " but come and see Arthur's room."

It is a *real* bedroom. Another brave outpost resisting the invader. To think of Colonel McGrath's homely bedroom adjoining Rosita's is to remember that one half of the world doesn't live. And the bathroom ! With an old-fashioned canopy. Pre-Adam.

" It must be the only one left in London," Rosita says. " Arthur's terribly proud of it."

I should think that he is terribly proud of his bathroom and his bedroom and his library. And his wife. You can tell from the happy way Rosita speaks about him. You can see him poking his amused nose into Rosita's rooms and murmuring : " Well, well ; go

ahead and amuse yourself, my dear. But thank God for the sane things of life, like geysers and Wall Street." They must have a grand time together.

And so down the stairs again, past the sleepy leopards, to Rosita's wonderful drawing-room. It is all that I have seen before—plus. It is every mirage on every sweltering desert. A huge place, it is really two rooms in one, meeting together on an angle of 90°—like a dog-leg hole on a golf course. A platoon of men could drill in this place, if you can imagine anything so absurd.

It is large and beautiful and in perfect taste. It is full of lovely, valuable things. It is less cold than the other rooms, and there are gay touches in the flowers that show Rosita is coming back to civilisation in this room. She could hear the bugle of the distant Foreign Legion when she planned this place; she was remembering that soon the trek would be over, and the official welcome would take place. There would be a luncheon in her honour; much talk; the glowing eyes of foreign admirers. She would be in the company of gossiping Europeans again, and she would have to look her best. Yes, this room was born like that—when Rosita was powdering her nose in readiness, and saying to her head man, "Wallahi, call it a day!"

I like to think of her in this room. She is gay, subduedly gay here. She is, in fact, happiest here. She has quite obviously, for the first time this afternoon, forgotten that she is showing the place to me, and is herself drinking it in again. The happiness of the room is passing over her in tremulous waves.

She does not know I am looking at her. Her face is in repose. The excitement has gone out of her, and she is no longer the keeper of the museum waiting for the visitor's tip. There is no visitor. There is no

museum. There is no Rosita. There is only the beautiful desert.

She is, as she admits, full of complexes. Full of mannerisms. But I think that much of her gaiety and sparkle is only defence. Her barriers. There is something lonely, and striving, and even forlorn about her. She would laugh at me if I said so, and her grey eyes would crinkle with mockery.

I would still feel it. What is it she is pursuing ; from what escaping ? To the ends of the earth she takes this long, slim body ; beyond the ends of the earth she sends this active, yearning, dreaming brain. She knows less peace than any other woman I know. She is living her next adventure before the present is ended. There is no present for Rosita. There is only a past and a future.

"I have a face like a suet pudding," she says, laughing, "and eyes like an overfed poodle's."

What a consciousness of self lies behind the sally ! Did some fool adult, a long time ago, mention in her hearing that she was a plain child ?

And has Rosita been running away from it ever since ?

LADY RHONDDA



Photograph

VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA

I WANTED to see Lady Rhondda in her office.

There, I thought, against a background that has been hers for so many years, I shall see something of the real woman of business ; I shall be able to catch from the desks, and the telephones, and the pictures on the wall, the atmosphere in which Lady Rhondda has steeped herself through half a lifetime.

I remembered that she had been at the right hand of her father as confidant, assistant and adviser ; that she had helped him to make order out of the chaos of the Welsh coalfields ; that she had planned with him the buying of collieries, sales agencies and other businesses on such a scale that in a single decade he had become the most powerful figure in the South Wales coal trade. I remembered also that she had on her own responsibility completed business deals involving hundreds of thousands of pounds ; that she had done valuable executive work during the Great War ; that after her father's death she had continued to control his affairs ; and that she had found time to build up and edit one of the foremost critical weekly journals in this country.

Yes, it was essential to see Lady Rhondda in her office. Not for her the quiet background of the home, or the gay background of the restaurant. It had to be the office.

A portrait of Lady Rhondda has been painted which shows her lazing under the beeches in her Kentish garden. Here, one might say, is the real woman—the essential woman behind the business mask, the woman

who wants out of life peace, and quietness, and the perfume of a garden. The woman who can lie dreaming under the beech tree has surely little in common with the office executive controlling the destinies of many people. There must be two Lady Rhonddas?

There are twenty. The garden-loving woman is no more the complete woman than is the office chief. But the garden is an escape and the office is reality—fashioned out of the deepest human instincts to aspire and achieve. Only people who want to evade their adult responsibilities in life desire to spend their days sheltering in a garden, or beachcombing in the South Seas, or hermiting in a Highland cottage. Lady Rhondda seeks escape to her Kentish garden as I seek escape on an Atlantic liner, or as we all seek escape in the theatre or cinema. She escapes so that she can come back to reality; she turns her back on life in order to be able to face it.

Lady Rhondda's office is in Bloomsbury. You go into one of these old houses that decorate this part of London, into a bare hall, straight down the hall to a little glass window for Inquiries. You look through this window for a moment at three young women making tea, because you have arrived just at tea time, then you press a button, and the alarm of the buzzer causes the three young heads to come up sharply and turn in your direction. The window is opened by one of the young women, and when you tell her that you have an appointment with Lady Rhondda, you are taken up two flights of stairs to the office of Lady Rhondda's private secretary, who, of course, is also a woman, and a very charming one.

She flashes you a smile as she makes a telephone connection for Lady Rhondda, and tickles the receiver

for a moment or two. You look around the bare room and discover with a shock of surprise a copy of your latest novel lying on a table. Hallo, you think, this is a pretty good office. They want you to feel at home here, and they choose this nice, tactful way of doing it. Dear little novel !

"Nice to see this here, among so many women," you say, touching your novel tenderly with your finger.

"Oh, that ?" answers the secretary with not too much enthusiasm.

"Yes, mine, you know."

"Oh . . . yes." A bit vaguely, you think. Can it be that she hasn't read it ? Perhaps it just happens to be lying around here after all. With no one interested in it ; no one taking any notice of it. Poor little novel !

"That's Lady Rhondda's copy," she says, as if to explain why she cannot immediately embark on a glowing eulogy of the thing herself.

You wait for a minute or two while the unseen Lady Rhondda finishes her telephone talk. Then the secretary takes you out into the passage, down one of the flights of stairs, taps at a door, opens it, stands aside so that you can go through into the room beyond.

A woman in black offers you her hand.

"Hallo, Lady Rhondda," you say. "So this is your office."

* * * * *

It is a large, lofty room with cream walls, a big desk at the far end of the room near the window, and an open fireplace with a very happy fire in it. Except for the desk, and the few papers upon it, and the two telephones, there is nothing at all in the room to suggest that it is an office. It is, in fact, the most un-officey office I have been in.

Through the window, and the black skeleton branches of winter trees beyond, we look at an old grey building. It is familiar.

I cross to the window.

"Don't say you overlook the British Museum, Lady Rhondda!"

Yes, she overlooks the Museum. When she turns her back on the glowing fire, on these cream walls, she gazes at the back of the British Museum. It must be lovely here in the Spring, with the young leaves outside the window, and the quiet square, and the flowers on her desk. There are flowers now—pink carnations and violets—in a small glass vase.

We walk about the room; we stand warming ourselves against the fire; we look at the pictures. There are half a dozen only. One of Bernard Shaw with an inscription in his own writing: "This is an aspect of me which I particularly dislike." One of St. John Ervine—a very spirited thing—which Ervine also dislikes. And one hanging over the fireplace which dominates the room. It is a picture of her father, Viscount Rhondda.

I look at it. It is the link between this room and all the struggle and achievement in the life of a great man and his daughter. I forget the tree outside the window, and the so-safe and so-secure British Museum in the background. I remember that this man set out with high hopes of winning a political fame which his own integral honesty and sincerity prevented him most from gaining. He had not the make-up of the politician. I remember that, coming from Wales, he was up against Lloyd George in most of his political career, and Lloyd George—in Lady Rhondda's own words—took the view that there was no room for two kings in Wales. The two men fought each other for

twelve years, until Lord Rhondda (then D. A. Thomas), after eating out his heart in a House that had no place for him, realised that there was little chance of his climbing the political ladder.

I remember, too, that even in the business to which he then turned his attention, he had to face bitter antagonism from the other coal owners in his attempts to improve the South Wales coal trade. He set out to get his own way by securing such a hold on the industry that he could dictate his own terms. In ten years' time, with the help of this woman in black standing by my side looking at this same picture, he had won. And won not only industrial success, but political recognition as well. Lloyd George, up to his neck in the War, had to request the services of men of real ability in a real crisis. He had to ask D. A. Thomas to join him, and "D. A." went to America to organise a regular munitions supply, returned to become Food Controller, and lived long enough to put into men's minds his consuming passion for a central Ministry of Health.

I come back to Lady Rhondda.

"Here is tea," she says quietly, and we sit down at the large desk, she with her back to a shelf containing the bound volumes of her weekly, *Time and Tide*, I in a comfortable arm-chair facing her.

Her dark hair is streaked with grey, and her blue-black eyes this afternoon are a little tired. If you saw this woman anywhere you would like her shy, shrewd face. A bit of a mouse, you might think, and the last thing you would imagine is that she is a bit of a business woman. She is very quiet and very motherly, and I know that you would have the feeling that she needs to be "taken out of herself" a little. You might see her, if you did not know that she has

no children, as one of those mothers who do so much—far too much in most cases—for their children ; doing it with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of devotion and self-sacrifice. You might believe that less attention to the family would be good for her ; you might even suggest that she should be good to herself and go oftener to the pictures. They cheer one up so !

Like all people who live a great deal within themselves she does not say much, except on subjects in which she is keenly interested. She has never had any ability or desire to sustain a futile social conversation, and will frankly confess so.

I remark on the success of her autobiography which has just been published, and she smiles shyly. She has always been shy—"devastatingly shy" she says. As an only child, without brothers and sisters to play with, she was thrown back upon herself for much of her playing. She longed for the company of other youngsters, prayed for a little sister, dreamed of a time when she might have twelve children of her own. Even when she Came Out, she went with her mother unwillingly to parties, found it difficult to get on with strangers, could talk to dancing partners of nothing but the weather, had a disconcerting capacity for forgetting faces, and was a complete social failure.

"I remember sitting stiffly beside one youth," she says, "who was as shy as myself, through a whole dance interval during which neither of us spoke a word."

Another time her young partner begged her to have some champagne. "It might make you talk," he said, but she told him that it would only send her to sleep. A shy, awkward girl indeed. Haven't most of the men and women who have lived lonely lives in child-

hood experienced the same kind of social torture? And who can tell how much of their ultimate achievement arises from the inborn necessity and determination to fulfil themselves?

I have sunk so deep in my comfortable chair that I can see only Lady Rhondda's head from where I sit. She has said what she wanted to say, quietly and crisply. The head is still now. Her tired eyes are a strange mixture of shyness and determination, and this face that is so friendly can be so firm.

I mention women's suffrage. Of course, when she got out of her teens and grew to womanhood and found England in the throes of the militant suffrage movement, she saw a chance of activity and self-expression which life—and a comfortable, childless marriage—had denied. She went into the suffrage movement with all the accumulated vitality and determination of her age. She embraced the cause, as so many other intelligent women of the period embraced it. It was a chance to do something at last, and to do something worth while.

Those dear dead days! I remind her of the Mr. Asquith incident, and she laughs softly.

"I've always felt a little guilty about that," she confesses, "because I don't know whether I achieved what I set out to achieve."

"But you gave Asquith a fright!"

She chuckles.

"Yes, I think I did that."

Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister of England, was to address an election meeting in St. Andrews. She had gone there to interrupt him and to remind him of the women's demand for votes. It was her task to do anything that would further the cause.

"There were three of us in the town," she says now,
G.W. P

the dark head quite motionless. "And we were puzzled how best to remind Mr. Asquith of our existence. You see, St. Andrews had decided to keep all women out of the Town Hall where the meeting was to be held, and there were scores of police guarding the building. The night of the meeting came, and we divided forces, each playing a lone hand. I decided that the only way to get at Mr. Asquith was to jump on the running board of his car as it came slowly down the street to the hall."

I watch her eyes. The tiredness has gone out of them as she retells the incident. But her voice has not changed in any way.

"It was quite an easy thing to do, really. The car slowed down, and before I knew what I was doing I was on that running board, my heart going like an engine with excitement. The Prime Minister shrank back as he saw me. I suppose it must have been a bit of a shock to him to see one of us firebrand suffragettes within striking distance of him. He went very pale and got as far away from me as he could. He probably thought I had a weapon of some sort. I hadn't, of course. All that was required of me was to call out 'Votes for Women!'—the reminder that we uttered whenever and wherever we could."

"And you didn't!" I taunt her.

"I don't know. I don't think I did. But I cannot actually say. I was so excited at seeing him in front of me that I think I forgot all about it. I hope I didn't fail." She breaks off and then adds: "Before I could do anything else I was pulled off by the angry crowd."

We laugh together.

"It was no laughing matter then," says Lady Rhondda. "That crowd behaved in anything but a

decent way, and I had to seek shelter in a friendly hotel."

She went to prison later for trying to destroy letters in pillar boxes, but she does not talk about that now. The remainder of the days of violence has made her restless and she rises and crosses the room to show me a picture on the wall behind me, which has a small silver pencil attached to it. It is a fortune-telling idea, a picture divided into sections in which are pencilled predictions of your fate.

" You take the silver pencil in your hand," she tells me, " shut your eyes, turn round once, and put the point of the pencil against the picture. Then we read your fate."

She persuades me to go through this idiotic procedure in this room looking out on the wise old British Museum. My fate is a bit obscure.

" What about you ? " I ask.

" Oh, I'm not superstitious. Let's try yours again."

I close my eyes. She guides my elbow. As the pencil goes back to the picture, I remember that this is the office of Lady Rhondda. I have wanted to see this office for a long time. I have wanted to see Lady Rhondda immersed in business, making these decisions that mean so much to many people. And here I am having my fortune told, shutting my eyes, turning round and blindly tapping at a mocking picture. Lady Rhondda at my side, is aiding and abetting.

Can this really be that famous woman who became D. A. Thomas's right-hand man ? Yes, this is the woman who was Margaret Haig Thomas, who went down to the Cardiff docks with her father, who was present at all interviews and conferences, who drafted all " D. A.'s " letters, who took over control of his newspapers, and who finally was responsible for the

conduct of all his interests. This is the same woman who, in 1915, went with her father to America, and on the return voyage in the *Lusitania* was torpedoed by a German submarine. The *Lusitania* went down, but "D. A." and his daughter were saved. She says of this experience that it was the experience that at last gave her confidence in herself, and destroyed her fear.

She goes back to her chair. An odd thought strikes me as I glance above her head. The desire for babies has always been with this woman. When she was ten, she wanted to have twelve babies. She still wants them. Above her head now are the bound volumes of *Time and Tide*. I know of course that this journal is the thing nearest her heart, the consuming interest of her life, and I smile a little sadly at my thought, because by some singular chance this afternoon these red bound volumes number twelve.

"Your baby is coming along very well," I say.

She knows what I mean, and glances up affectionately at the volumes. Very like a mother. This is indeed her baby. In shaping and moulding and loving a paper, Lady Rhondda is fulfilling herself. I know the experience so well. A paper is something for which you willingly renounce and surrender self. Into a paper you put all the love and devotion that you would give to a child, and like a child it gives you great pleasure and sometimes great suffering. You tend the frail thing as a parent tends his young, fighting for it with every instinct of your conscious and subconscious self. If it is a weakness of yours to start awake in the middle of the night, you are either a new parent or an old editor.

"But a paper differs from a baby," I say, "in that you are never satisfied with it. Don't you think that's

true, Lady Rhondda? The fond parent of a baby thinks it's the most marvellous thing in the world, and that there is nothing wrong with it. The parent of a paper is perpetually discontented. It is never so good as he feels it ought to be. I know no man connected with the running of a newspaper who leans back contentedly, looks fondly at his product, and says: 'Isn't it perfect? It couldn't be bettered.' He always believes that it can—and will—be better to-morrow."

She nods in agreement.

Shortly afterwards she has to leave for an appointment elsewhere, and she goes to a door in the cream wall which conceals a cupboard. She takes her hat and cloak from the peg. I offer to give her a lift, but she is going in the opposite direction and says she will find a taxi in the street. We go down the stairs together.

We stand together a moment longer, chatting in the doorway. There is no sign of a taxi-cab. We go out on to the pavement. Lady Rhondda turns away in her direction, I in mine. We are both looking for taxi-cabs. I glance right, left, backward. She is still walking away along the pavement, and the men and women in the street, closing in on her, are taking away her identity.

A motherly woman you would say. A little tired, you might think, with so much work at home. She ought to be good to herself once in a while and go to the pictures. Maybe, like so many of the people around her, she is going there now. Maybe.

Photograph by
DOROTHY WILDING



TILLY LOSCH

Just inside the stage door, two men have stopped Tilly Losch as she is about to go out into the afternoon sunshine.

" You're not forgetting the photographer at 5.30, Miss Losch ? " one reminds her.

She shakes her head wearily.

" No, I am not forgetting."

" On the stage, Miss Losch."

" Yes, I remember. I know. On the stage at five-thirty. I shall be back at five-thirty." Turning to me : " Will you see that I am back at five-thirty ? "

I swear that she shall be back.

" Miss Losch," says the other man, " one of the weekly papers wants to send an artist to sketch you. Can you give him half an hour ? "

The tiredly-heavy eyes seem to grow heavier.

" I am so tired. Will this evening do ? "

He makes a note of it on a piece of paper.

" Now let us go," says Tilly Losch, and remembers.

" My hat. Is my hat being altered as I suggested ? "

She is assured that it is being altered. She folds the lovely apple-green dress over her arm—the lovely apple-green dress which she wears in the ballet " Anna-Anna "—and looks round vaguely.

" Have I my shoes ? "

I have the green shoes in my hand to match the dress. Tilly Losch is on her way to Dorothy Wilding to have some studio portraits done in this dress and, dropping in on her at this moment, I have been invited to spend a spare half-hour with her.

But we are not free yet.

" That lighting you wanted, Miss Losch . . . "

" Yes ? "

" It'll be all right for to-morrow night."

" Thank you. Is the car ready ? "

" It's waiting, Miss Losch. And I'll see that it's at Dorothy Wilding's to bring you back again in time for the stage photographs."

She looks at me out of her utterly weary eyes, eyes so palely blue that they are almost grey.

" Let us go now."

At the telephone a man calls out :

" Just a moment, Miss Losch. One of the gossip writers on the newspapers wants to write something human and personal about you."

Her wide, full mouth parts in a faint smile. She waits.

The man at the telephone, holding his hand over the mouthpiece : " He'd like to say something about your hobbies."

" I have no hobbies."

Hopefully : " About your garden, then, Miss Losch. Are you fond of gardening ? "

" No."

" What about dogs ? "

A quickened interest in the wistful figure.

" Yes, that is better."

" Have you a dog, Miss Losch ? "

" But I love my dog. He is called Schnozzle."

The man speaks into the mouthpiece, then lifts his head. Apologetically : " He doesn't know how to spell it, Miss Losch."

Impatiently, almost indignantly : " But everybody knows how to spell Schnozzle. I call him Schnozzle after the film comedian, of course."

More telephoning while we all wait.

Even more apologetically: "He wants to know what film comedian, Miss Losch?"

Her eyes open wide. So do mine. We stare at each other.

"*What film comedian?*" Speaking rapidly: "Do you mean to say that he works on a newspaper and does not know of Jimmy Durante, who is called Schnozzle? Jimmy Durante, whom I adore. He is my favourite—I think he is wonderful. You know; the man with the big nose! Schnozzle!" She gives a tiny imitation of Jimmy Durante's famous line: "*I've got mill-yuns of 'em. Mill-yuns!*"

The man at the telephone grasps the connection between Tilly Losch's dog and the American film comedian, but the gossip writer at the other end of the line is not quite so quick.

"Oh, let us go," she pleads, after the name has been spelt half a dozen times.

"The car is waiting, Miss Losch."

"Thank you."

"You're not forgetting the—"

"Five-thirty on the stage. I am not forgetting."

And as we step into the car: "Give me a cigarette, please." And a moment later, through the blue smoke: "I could sleep for a week."

* * * * *

She has always danced. She made her first appearance on the stage at the State Opera House in 1912, in the town where she was born—Vienna. She was ten years of age when she appeared as a child dancer in "Wiener Waltzer," but long before that she had danced.

She danced as a baby because the instinct to dance was in her. She danced because she *had* to dance—to

please herself, to delight her mother, to entertain her mother's visitors in their Viennese home. It was one of these visitors—herself a Spanish dancer—who, taking tea with Tilly Losch's mother one day, watched the child and recognised her talents.

As a result of this visitor's persuasions, Tilly was sent to the Opera to be trained. After "Wiener Waltzer" she appeared in Korngold's ballet "Das Schneemann," and subsequently became *première danseuse* of the Opera House. For a long time she was associated with Max Reinhardt in Vienna and Berlin, and ultimately she went with his company to America in 1927.

In New York she was the first fairy in Reinhardt's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and later the principal dancer in "Everyman." She also staged and supervised the dances in these productions, and by this time the far-seeing Mr. C. B. Cochran was marking her down for London's own. He brought her to the Pavilion in 1928 in "This Year of Grace," and London fell, as Mr. Cochran knew it would fall.

Had she lived in the times when men did that sort of thing, she would have been the toast of the town; as it was she was certainly the "rage" of the town—a strange *cliché* to express our admiration for her sinuous grace, her wistful beauty, and the remarkable resource and invention of her dancing. So great was her success that she appeared in Mr. Cochran's next revue, "Wake Up and Dream" the following year, and repeated her triumph.

I am thinking all this as I sit in the car, half turned toward the figure in the other corner—the figure which, on the stage, radiates energy and life. Success has not taken away from her that haunting pessimism that has always been hers. To-morrow night she is

opening in her own ballet, and thus realising a dream that has possessed her for years. Whatever happiness there is in her at the prospect, and I know that there is, it makes no sign on the surface.

But Tilly Losch has always been like this—almost Russian in her fatalism. Her face is pensive, almost sad. You can read little in the pale eyes, behind which she seems eternally to be preoccupied with the tragedy of life.

To-morrow night fatigue will drop from her like a dress. She will fill the stage with her grace and her beauty, and the hard work of preparation will fall away from her and be forgotten ; but to-day she is too near the work and not near enough to the performance.

"I wonder why she does it," some one said to me at lunch this same day. "I wonder why she bothers about it any more."

I remember my friend's remark, looking at Tilly Losch now in the car. My friend was surprised that she, who has been so fortunate in her private as well as her professional life, should any longer desire to express herself through dancing. He forgot the artist.

Tilly Losch is married to one of the wealthiest young men in England. Her husband, Edward James, is a son of the late Mrs. Willie James, a famous hostess and close friend of King Edward VII. Mrs. James was the only hostess without a title whom Queen Alexandra honoured with a visit, and King Edward was Edward James' godfather.

Edward James, always interested in the arts, is fortunate in having had the money to gratify his artistic instincts. At Oxford he used to write poems which were privately printed for distribution among his friends. His beautiful rooms were among the wonders of Christ Church.

He figures in the newspapers now and again, doing the odd, individual and expensive things which newspapers cannot resist. He owns an immense Rolls-Royce car, for instance, inside which—at the pressing of a button—a completely equipped bed appears. A few years ago he bought four houses in Rome, one to live in, one to visit in the afternoons, one for his friends to stay in, and one in which to play the piano.

When he fell in love with Tilly Losch, and she said No, he followed her across to America, finally persuaded her to marry him, and took her to Honolulu for the honeymoon. Now they live in a house "as big as Windsor Castle," as one of my friends describes it, and it boasts a private theatre and the most magnificent bathroom in London.

And to-morrow night Edward James is launching his wife as the chief star in an ambitious ballet season.

She sighs through the cigarette smoke.

"I fell better now. I have been so ill, and all this work has tired me so."

I repeat my friend's wonderment as if it were my own.

"I wonder why you do it." And add: "You have everything you want."

Tilly Losch's eyes open quite wide. Usually they are just slits of eyes seen through her long black lashes. She stares at me as if she did not understand.

"Why do I do it?"

"Yes."

"Are you asking me why I do it? Why I dance? But all my life I have danced."

"I expect that's why some people think you shouldn't want to now."

Even a ballet dancer can snort. Tilly Losch snorts.

"But I am an artist. I *must* dance! It is something

in me to be said in that particular way. It is my work." She is sitting straighter now. She has lost the moody interest in the thronged London streets. "I do not know what makes me do it, but I must do it. I do not know what I want out of life, or what I am striving for, but I am like all artists, whether they are painters, or writers, or players, or poets.

"It is something inside me. I am ill when I do not work. I am ill when I do. Surely it is like that with every artist. I am ill every night when I am dancing in the theatre. It is not what one *gets* out of dancing. It is that one must do it for one's own satisfaction. I feel I have to justify myself in that way—express myself. But you know what I mean. How silly to say you wonder why I do it. Because it is not necessary from the money point of view? How foolish!"

I know that every day, preparing for this ballet, she works from nine o'clock till midnight. Every morning she is on her toes, "loosening up" for her exercises and dancing. Every afternoon she is hard at it, rehearsing her movements, perfecting her poses, drilling interminably through her dances until even the watcher is weary. Every evening the social life is sacrificed to art.

"The artist is never content," she says, nervously tapping the window of the car with the tips of her nails as we are held up in a traffic jam. "I mean, he may be content in the wordly sense, be happy and satisfied with all the good things of life, but in his art he cannot come to a halt and say "I go no further." He must always want to go further. Every day that I live gives me something which I want to see expressed in dancing."

The car moves forward. Her full red lips part slightly in a sigh of relief.

" But all this worry," I suggest.

" Worry ? "

" This being photographed. This welter of detail that you must attend to."

" It is all part of the same thing. All part of the art of putting on the stage to-morrow night to a critical audience the dances one has lived with for months."

" But it's killing you."

A slow smile. The haunted face loses nothing of its brooding in the smile, but the eyes are suddenly alive.

" It is life to me."

* * * * *

She is wearing the apple-green dress now, and stands wilting under the withering glare of hot arc lamps at the end of the studio. In the centre of the room, in the pool of darkness lapping silently around the camera, Dorothy Wilding takes a quick glance at her.

" That's lovely," she says, twittering like a bird, hopping lightly backward and forward, " I've taken that. Now we're warming up to it ! I always warm up to it after about a dozen pictures or so. Could we have a touch of coquetry in the next one, Miss Los—? That's lovely. Perfectly lovely. Just hold that. Or do you think we might raise the left hand just a fraction to give—Beautiful. I've taken that. It's going to come out awfully well, I think."

Two green-robed girl assistants follow the quick, bird-like movements of the photographer, one tirelessly adjusting the lights devouring Tilly Losch, the other tirelessly feeding the camera with plates.

I sit in the gloom. I have never seen photographs taken with such rapidity, never seen anyone fall into such natural poses as Tilly Losch.

Dorothy Wilding says: "A touch of wistfulness," and Tilly Losch moves her hands and arms. A mere suggestion of a move. The flicker of a finger. The twist of a wrist. The downward casting of the eyes. The slightest drooping of the head. And: "That's beautiful. Perfect."

A confirming murmur from the assistant at the camera: "Lovely."

"I've taken it," from Dorothy Wilding.

A second later: "Do you think, Miss Losch—Your right arm—suppose we lift it above the—Lovely, lovely. I've taken that. I think it should be very good."

The twittering bird hops about with the certainty of efficiency. She knows what she wants to do, and the woman under the arc lamps knows also. It is a striking contrast, this studio. At one end a slim, sad woman, still and silent and motionless in the brilliant glare; at the other end a tubby, twittering woman peering through coloured glasses, moving restlessly in the deep gloom.

It is a ballet in itself. The two green-robed girls dance between the two women, one lifting her arms and pulling down blinding lights from heaven, the other stooping low for plates, straightening herself in the darkness for a tense second, leaping into life again at Dorothy Wilding's "Lovely. I've taken that."

They dance in and out of the light like fluttering butterflies. It needs only music to make this a theatre.

Tilly Losch drops into another pose. In herself she seems to be girlish and innocent, but at the sound of Dorothy Wilding's voice she can give her body under its apple-green dress the most sophisticated and alluring lines.

She raises her eyes until only the whites are left showing ; it makes her inexpressibly sad and " lost." She drops her head and looks sidelong at the camera ; in a moment she is a wanton. She raises her slim hands toward her breasts, tilts her chin ; she becomes a nun.

And from Dorothy Wilding : " I always warm up after a dozen shots or so. So does the sitter. It gives her time to lose any self-consciousness. I think we're warming up nicely now. Hold that, Miss Losch. That's very lovely."

" Lovely," from her assistant.

" Lovely," from the girl at the lights.

" I've got that. Now, with your right hand—yes, that's it . . ."

It is like a drilling on a parade ground. Efficient, relentless, tireless. It goes on and on.

At last : " I think you should relax, Miss Losch. You're getting a little stiff, I think."

No sigh of relief from Tilly Losch. She is as much part of this ballet as the others, as much in tune with it, as intelligently comprehensive of it. She stands under the lights moving her fingers, hands and arms, exercising the stiffness out of them. She sways her body backward and forward for a few moments.

Dorothy Wilding takes off her glasses.

" What is the time, please ? " Tilly Losch asks.

It is five o'clock.

" I have an appointment at five-thirty," she says.

Dorothy Wilding is disappointed.

" Oh, what a pity. We're just warming up to it nicely ! " The glasses go back to her eyes. " I think if you don't mind, we might have that pose again—you know, the one with your hands across your breasts—yes, that's it. Now . . ."

It is as if the conductor of the orchestra had raised his baton. The ballet plunges into life. To and fro go the fluttering butterflies, backward and forward moves the twittering bird. Silently stands the woman in apple-green under the lights. The dancing around her quickens, gains momentum, rises to a climax. It beats about her. She responds to its rhythm, caught up in its silent music.

* * * * *

The crowded theatre is silent and in darkness. The first few rows of the stalls, catching the glow from the stage, reveal the pink faces and the gleaming white shirts of men in evening dress and the faces and coloured frocks of smart women. The rest of the audience is a pink blur in the dim light coming from the stage.

It is the first performance of Georges Balanchine's production of "Anna-Anna." Tilly Losch and Lotte Lenja have just commenced that unusual and arresting ballet, which for many days to come will be discussed by this and other audiences. They have entered the stage as sisters under the same cloak, and Lotte Lenja, as the first Anna, sings that her sister and she come from Louisiana; that they left home a few weeks before to try their luck in the big cities; that in seven years they hope to make enough money to go home again.

Tilly Losch is only an echo of the first Anna. She is the pretty sister, the other is the more practical. "In fact," sings the practical one, "we are not two people at all, but one single one. We are both called Anna, we have one past and one future, one heart and one postal savings account, and each does what is best for the other." Tilly Losch murmurs her echoing confirmation of this.

And now Tilly Losch dances through the incidents in the career of Anna, while Lotte Lenja describes the action in song, and a male quartette booms out in a corner of the stage, representing the family at home.

Anna's first incident describes the first of the seven deadly sins, Laziness. The practical Anna invents a system of blackmailing lover-like couples in the Park. The pretty Anna throws her arms round the male, pretending to recognise him, while the practical Anna takes the woman aside and suggests that a money payment will quieten her sister. They play this trick on three pairs of lovers, but the pretty Anna grows weary at the fourth pair and prefers to sleep on a seat.

Then Anna gets a job as solo dancer in a cabaret in the second town of their journey.

"But smart hats and dresses," sings the practical Anna, "are apt to make a young girl arrogant."

Anna wishes to do a different kind of dance in the cabaret, but she is compelled to sacrifice Art and Beauty for what the people want.

"These people," sings her sister, "these people have paid good money and they want to be amused."

So Anna overcomes Pride, the second of the capital sins. She copies the vulgar style of dancing, but the bottom, alas, has fallen out of her ideals.

The family in the corner of the stage sings angrily that Anna is not sending enough money home. However, Anna refutes their complaint. "We are now in Los Angeles," she sings happily. "We have a job in a circus ; things are going better."

And now Anna allows the third capital sin, Anger, to overcome her. She sees a horse ill-treated and protests. She nearly loses her job in consequence.

Now she gets a contract in Philadelphia, where she must starve herself to keep her figure. Her natural

appetite is kept at bay at the point of her sister's revolver, and Greed, the fourth deadly sin, is defeated.

And so to sadness. Anna permits herself the luxury of falling in love with a boy who has no money. She keeps him as well as herself, but can do this because she gets a liberal allowance from her official lover.

The practical Anna discovers this and contrives to make her sister jealous by becoming friendly with the poor young man. A fight between the two follows. Anna gives up her boy friend. For to have loved for the sake of love alone is the fifth deadly sin.

Avarice is the sixth error. Anna at last reaches the top of the tree by conforming to the rules which make for a wordly career. No longer hampered by ideals, she accepts the flattery of men ruining themselves for her. But she overdoes it, and the practical Anna puts a stop to her folly.

The last stage of their journey is San Francisco. Anna is tired, and almost wishes that she had allowed herself to be natural. She has won what she set out to win, and has made enough money to build the little house in Louisiana.

Yet she envies the people who have really lived and loved. But her practical self cries out : "Envy, that is the last, and most terrible, of all the vices. We are born free, with free instincts, but from birth nothing in the world wishes us to remain free."

Still embraced by envy, she longs for what she has lost. Yet her practical self continues chanting : " Sister, for the last time you must overcome your natural instincts, and thus you will go in triumph through the world."

The music dies. Tilly Losch stops dancing. The curtain falls. The lights come on in the theatre.

Tilly Losch and Lotte Lenja, holding hands, face the clatter of applause.

A quickly-breathing Tilly Losch. A Tilly Losch come awake out of the dream of her dancing to the reality of a people's appreciation of it.

* * * * *

The dressing-room is crowded with people in evening dress. They come along the passage, down the stairs, to this room nearest the stage. They cannot all crush into it at the same time, so they overflow into the passage, good-naturedly squeezing their way through the door when others come out to make space for them.

Tilly Losch is holding court, smiling a bright, tired smile to her friends, laughing a little nervously, surrendering her slim hand to be kissed.

The room is a quiet sea of congratulations washing around the slight figure in its centre.

" Miss Losch, you were wonderful ! "

" Tilly, it was divine ! "

" My dear, the loveliest thing I've ever seen. You were simply marvellous ! "

She murmurs : " Thank you. Do you think it was all right ? I felt it was a little uncertain in the . . . "

She waits for real criticism. The artist wants to know what is bad so that for ever afterwards it can be made good. In her moment of triumph she is self-critical, self-questioning.

" Darling, it was wonderful ! "

" Tilly, you were gorgeous ! "

" My dear, I've never seen anything so lovely."

She smiles. Tiredly ? Sadly ? Mysteriously ?

At this moment you can make nothing out of that face, which seems amidst the chatter of compliments and congratulations to be so much aloof and alone.



LADY CLODAGH ANSON

From a painting by
SIMON ELWES

LADY CLODAGH ANSON

I

IN one of his wireless talks a few months ago, Mr. J. B. Priestley described the kind of ideal country he would try to create if he were suddenly made Dictator. It was a country in which poverty and the fear of starvation were to be unknown.

The necessities of life would be *given* by the state to every individual. No one could starve, because the State would provide bread. No one could go shelterless, because the State would give adequate shelter to every man, woman and child. In Mr. Priestley's country, life without the dread of hunger and destitution would be the birthright of everyone.

No one, therefore, would have to work for the bare necessities of existence, but every one would have to work for the luxuries. If you wanted cake instead of bread, you would work. If you desired a cottage in the country, or half a dozen suits, or a motor car, or a case of wine, or a fountain pen, or a silk dressing-gown, or a typewriter, you would work. If you longed to buy a new book, or a piano, or a newspaper, or even a dish-towel, you would have to work.

In other words, every one of us would work, because all of us want possessions of one kind or another, but we should never go hungry, or starve, or lie huddled on an Embankment bench in the cold dawn.

I remember that I listened to Mr. Priestley while my slippers feet rested on the soft cushion of another chair. At my elbow there was a pleasant drink.

Within me a good and nourishing dinner was slowly being digested. I switched off the wireless when he had finished speaking and sat thinking. I have never starved, but I have gone hungry. Once when we were cut off after a successful big "push" in France, and food was ultimately got to us by aeroplane. Once in America when I had a run of bad luck.

Once in New York, too, I was summarily pitched out of a job through my own fault, and life looked temporarily grim. I can still remember the queer empty feeling in the stomach that losing a job gives one. It is as if you no longer belonged to society. You are unwanted. Millions, alas, have experienced that unpleasant thrill in the last few years through no fault of their own.

It seemed to me that there was a lot to be said for Mr. Priestley's plan. I did not believe for a moment that it would make people lazy. The lazy ones would not work—as now. The industrious ones would—as now. But neither would starve. Who wants any one to starve?

I went out into Hyde Park, still busy with Mr. Priestley and his happy land. On the first bench, under a tree, an old man sat in the shadow. His shoulders were bent. His clothes were ragged. His face was pinched and pathetic. I put my hand into my pocket. Not instinctively, not generously, because I do not feel like that about these things. I have a belief, which I know is shared by other people, that men will resent taking money. I credit—quite foolishly, I have discovered—these unfortunate down-and-outs with the same sensitiveness as myself, and my first instinctive feeling is not so much to give monetary help as to shield their respect. Quite often I have wanted to give help, put my hand into my

pocket, burned with shame for the damned condescension of the act, passed the man, and returned again to summon up courage to give the something he needed.

The man raised his head as I stopped. And suddenly I thought of Lady Clodagh Anson, who knows more about down-and-outs and the underworld of London than any other woman in the country. Something she had said to me flashed into my mind:

"Don't worry about the old men who come West, as we call it, and sit on the Park benches putting on a pathetic face. They're not the people who need help. They make a regular job of doing that, and get a good living out of it. But the ones who need help are the ones who never show it. They are putting a good face on everything and hiding their plight."

2

She was christened Clodagh after the river at Curraghmore. The name means "stony place," but they used to tease her when she was tiny and say it meant "muddy water." She was furious. She is still furious if any one copies it or names their children after her.

She is fifty-four, and full of force and drive. She has a merry, thrustful personality, eager blue eyes, crisp iron-grey hair brushed straight back from her fresh-complexioned face. She has a wide, generous mouth and the high colouring of many Irish women. She comes of a famous hunting family, and has known everybody from King Edward to Buffalo Bill, from Lord Kitchener to Dr. Axel Muthe.

In her life she has lived on a ranch in Texas, in an Irish mansion, in a "pub" in Monaco which was so

low and revolting that when she went to her bedroom, in fear of being murdered, she barricaded the door with furniture and listened all night to the din of drunken men downstairs. Now she lives in a London house—in Pimlico, near the river—and every room of it was painted by down-and-out young men whom she had befriended.

She calls them her "boys." A room in her house is set aside for them to use as a kind of club or meeting place. It has a door leading into the street so that they can gain entry to it without coming through the main door of the house and disturbing Lady Clodagh Anson at the odd hours of the night when they seek her shelter. A fire is set in this room, winter or summer. There are books, newspapers, chairs, a table to write on or to eat at.

There is another room in this house, high up toward the roof, which has a more unhappy aspect. It is a room with a number of suit-cases lying on the floor, a number of paper parcels, a few pairs of boots. These are the worldly possessions of a few of the boys who are in jail. Lady Clodagh Anson is taking care of their property.

There is something desolating about this room. The suit-cases stand waiting for their owners. You imagine a young red hand around the handle of this paper-fibre affair nearest the door. A young red hand full of life and strength. A young red hand, at this moment as you look, making canvas bags in a prison. The rest of the body to which this hand belongs will return to this room at the end of his term, and Lady Clodagh Anson will feed it, rest it, send it on its way, perhaps to a job, with a new belief in life in it.

"What did he do?" you ask.

A little bitterly : " Nothing. Arrested on suspicion. It's enough. In he goes, to mix with real criminals and learn their trade, and there's one more potential criminal in the making. It's wicked. If magistrates only knew ! "

You indicate another suit-case.

" And that one ? "

Her bright eyes cloud.

" The same. One of the best boys I've ever known. Keen and clever. He's incapable of doing anything wrong. Arrested on suspicion. A bit of praise for a young policeman ; a stern warning from a magistrate ; and a term for the boy."

Yes, a sad room. Tucked away in these cases are the hopes as well as the wordly possessions of many young men.

The rest of this unusual house is less sad than this single room. It is indeed a happy house, run by Lady Anson without any help but the help she gets from her boys. They do things for her whenever they get the chance. They painted the walls, the doors and the ceilings of every room. They helped her to hang the curtains. They laid the carpets. On one occasion when she was taken ill downstairs they attended to her, carried her up to her bedroom, put her to bed and nursed her for several days.

All of which is hardly surprising, because Lady Clodagh Anson gives all her time and energy to serving them. She began her work just twelve years ago when she first came over from Ireland to live in London. The people she had served in Ireland treated her in return as most of the aristocracy were treated by Irish republicans at the time of " the trouble." They wrecked her home. They turned on the house that had seen most of them through bad times and given

work throughout the countryside, and vented their political spite upon it.

On her first Christmas Day here she heard that workers were wanted for a canteen which was originally started for the unemployed after the war. She eagerly offered her services, and while working in the canteen was asked by the organiser if she would care to work regularly. This she did for two years, eventually saving the canteen when it was about to be forced to close down, and taking charge herself. From that time onward, looking after the down-and-out has been her life's work.

For nine months of the year she has an average of 500 people a day at the canteen in Westminster Bridge Road, between twelve and one thirty, but in the summer months the number is reduced to about 300, as a lot of her customers go into the country to work in the fields and on the harvest. The majority of these unfortunate people can afford to pay the small sums charged for meals, but in no case is food refused to the penniless.

The helpers in the canteen are drawn from all classes of society. There are society girls, mothers of families who own big houses, young married women, professional women, and quite old ladies. The manager, Mr. Andrews, is an ex-gunner, who not only cooks an excellent meal, but finds time to train unemployed boys at the canteen and pass them on to regular paid jobs when they are fit for them.

Everybody who has ever worked there remembers the canteen, and sends one or more half-crowns at Christmas to give a free dinner to some homeless man or woman. On Christmas Day there is a feast, and anybody who is in London and can spare the time goes down and waits on the guests. Last Christmas

Day over 900 people were given dinner and, as each left the canteen, a pork pie and mince pie in a bag for the evening meal.

For ten years Lady Anson has laboured in this way, and of course she has become known to every down-and-out in London. Then a few years ago a friend of hers conceived the wonderful idea of going round with a midnight motor coffee-van for all the homeless people who have nowhere to sleep. They started out just after midnight every night, when the streets were nearly deserted, and only the genuinely derelict were lurking in the shadows waiting to be attracted by the bright lights of the van and the cup of tea, or coffee, bread and dripping, and cigarette.

They opened up on the Embankment and then went on to the Square (the down-and-out's name for Trafalgar Square), then along the Mall and up to Bayswater Road, returning to the Embankment for breakfast from five o'clock to six. Not a bad night's work.

" You see," says Lady Clodagh Anson, " I'm such a bad sleeper anyway, and I'd much rather be doing that than lying awake doing nothing."

3

And is it all grim and hopeless and futile, this working among the unlucky people who would benefit in Mr. Priestley's new country? Listen to Lady Clodagh Anson, as I listened not long ago across the tea table in her house in Pimlico.

" One night when it was terribly cold, and snow was falling, we came upon a young boy all by himself on the Embankment. He was leaning up against a stone

projection, a picture of complete hopelessness and despair. We stopped and went over with a cup of tea to try to cheer him up and find out what was wrong. He could not speak at first, but after a time we got his story. He suffered from fits, and, not being able to keep his job, had bought a small attaché case with some ornaments and cheap things to sell. In this way he made enough money for his bed and food.

"That day he had restocked his case, leaving himself only fourpence in cash. With this he had bought a cup of tea at a café, dropped off to sleep for a few minutes, and waked to find that his case and goods had been stolen. You can imagine the poor boy's despair. We managed to comfort him and then collected some new stock and a hawker's licence. For a long time he used to come to the canteen for his dinner, and finally a doctor took an interest in his case, operated on his head and cured his fits, and got him a regular job."

She poured me out another cup of tea, offered me a scone, and for a moment our talk turned to food. The talk always turns to food when you are with this woman—food, or the clothes she receives from all her lucky friends for her unlucky friends. Her life is spent in feeding and clothing people.

"Such a strange world. In my young days at Curraghmore, food was one of the most important things in life—but in a different sense from now. Now it's food to live that I have to see to for these poor people. Then it was the important detail of a well-run house in times when people ate heartily.

"Everybody ate an enormous breakfast, with a long row of about eight dishes on a heater, boiled eggs in a china hen, and an enormous sideboard with every

conceivable cold stuff on it. You would have thought that would have lasted them most of the day, but there was lunch at two o'clock, with entrées and joints on the sideboard as before. Then a huge tea at five, and finally dinner at eight with never-ending courses—soup, fish, a sort of chicken entrée, a meat entrée, roast, bird, sweet, biscuits and cheese, dessert."

Her bright eyes twinkled. No bitterness in them. No acrid condemnation of the piggishness of another generation. That was how things were done then in Lady Clodagh Anson's home in Ireland. In the same woman's canteen in the Westminster Bridge Road a 5d. dinner of meat pie and two vegetables is served to the upper class of unfortunate, a 4d. one of three sausages and mashed potatoes to the middle class, a 2d. one of sausage and a roll to the lower class, and a free meal to the down-and-out.

She sees some odd people, glimpses some queer lives, in the course of her work. When she was going round with the midnight coffee-van she became great friends with two old women called Nelly and Annie, in Bayswater Road. On wet nights she had to search for them all over the place and carry their supper to them when eventually she found their sleeping-place tucked away in some safe corner. At one time there was a big house being turned into flats, and the workmen had put a pile of bricks in the porch, leaving a little sheltered nest behind them. Nelly and Annie had claimed this for their own, and were terrified lest the policeman should discover them and move them on.

Lady Anson had to be very careful not to betray them. One night, starting out from the van, which had been drawn up some distance away from the hiding-place, she was surprised by a policeman's lamp flashing down the street. As it was evident that he

had spotted her, and was watching her progress across the street with a tray, two cups of tea and some bread and cakes, she had to think rapidly. She walked up and down the middle of the road in the pouring rain, her tray held out in front of her, looking into all the empty doorways and feeling the complete fool. The policeman stood stock-still and watched her with growing suspicion.

Looking as innocent as the circumstances permitted, she finally returned to the van, calling out in a loud voice to her colleague : " I can't find them anywhere." They had to drive off without giving the old women their supper, and learned afterwards that Nelly and Annie had seen the whole pantomime from their shelter and were frightened in case their hiding-place should be revealed.

On another occasion Lady Anson noticed a boy who was wearing an extraordinary garment—a long, old-fashioned ulster tied round his waist with string. He had no socks, and wore shoes which were held together by a bandage. Several of the very young boys were running round in the cold trying to keep warm, and one of these, in passing, caught hold of the coat. It fell open. The poor fellow had nothing at all on underneath.

By the next night clothes had been collected for him, and he retired behind Cleopatra's Needle and covered his nakedness. Afterwards he explained his plight. Getting soaked to the skin, he had taken off all his clothes in a doss-house, to discover next morning that some one had stolen them. He kicked up such a fuss that the owner of the lodging-house had searched out the old ulster and the shoes.

" He often comes to see us," Lady Anson said to me. " Sometimes he is very smart, sometimes very

grubby. His fortunes vary, and he and I have had some big fights over the foolish things he does which lose him his jobs."

There was a blind man in Bayswater Road who always told her every night the story of how, years before, a farmer had flicked at him with his whip and blinded him. He employed an old woman named Minnie to lead him about. He gave her five shillings a week out of his blind pension of ten, and paid for her food, but he would never pay for her bed and so she had to stay out at nights also. They wandered about all night, and poor Minnie's feet were so bad that she could never keep still for a moment. The old man finally disappeared. Lady Anson could not find out what happened to him, but she heard that Minnie had died in hospital.

She is asked for the strangest things—wooden legs are in great demand; and whenever her friends are sent to prison, all kinds of treasured possessions are sent round to her to be kept for them while they are away. One old man asked her to get his carpenter's tools out of an Underground station cloakroom and keep them for him, so she found herself staggering down a taxi-less street with a huge old box weighing about a ton.

One time a boy who played the mouth organ was engaged in a coster band, and Lady Anson and her friends had to go off to the most unlikely music-halls where the band was performing, and sit in the front row applauding loudly and demanding an encore so that the "turn" should get a better place in the programme, or a return visit. It is all in the great game. She loves every demand made upon her.

She is always interested in the extraordinary ways by which some of her friends make a few pennies.

"I have known them to put petrol in their mouths and then light a match and blow so that it gives the impression of fire coming out of their mouths," she told me. "It is, of course, frightfully dangerous unless done very carefully, and sometimes they set themselves on fire. They have to keep a very keen lookout for the policeman when they are doing it, and they should really be giving all their attention to the dangerous trick. It is this that is so often their undoing."

Others tie themselves up in ropes and chains and do the "strong man" act at the street corners by relaxing their muscles and slipping out of their bonds. A lot of them go to the fish market at Billingsgate at five o'clock in the morning. The vans from the shops and stores stay up on the top of the hill above the monument, and when their buyers have chosen their fish the regular market porters place the cases on their barrows, wheel them out into the street and call, "Hill up!" The boys rush to get the job of pushing at the back of the barrow, all the way up the steep hill, for which they get twopence.

In addition, if the barrow is accidentally tipped back, they also get their clothes covered with fish scales and slime.

It is "the boys" that she loves. The older men and women have a place in her affections, but it is too late to do much about saving them. She can feed them, and clothe them, and even house them somewhere, but their years are behind them and for them there is no future such as youth dreams.

The boys are different. They have just started out in life, and circumstances have forced most of them to start out wrongly. Lady Anson does her best to see them started out again on the right road.

"They're such good boys!" Her bright eyes softened. She leaned toward me impulsively, eager to persuade me, if I needed any persuading. "Such good *bad* boys! It's the bad ones I love. It shows they've got something in them, something adventurous and enterprising. It's that that makes them bad."

She passed a hand through her strong grey hair. She has always adventured herself. She feels deeply the lack of opportunities for boys in this depressed and suspicious world of to-day.

"What can they do?" she demanded aggressively. "Nobody wants them. There are no jobs for them. There is no emigration as there used to be in the old days. The adventurous boys long ago went to Canada or Australia. They got all the *go* in them expressed that way. They *worked* it out of them. But they can't emigrate now. There's nowhere to emigrate to."

"They can't even stowaway now. Ships are searched at the docks as they never were before. If a good boy hides, he's picked out of the hold before the ship sets out, and parked back on the land. So what can they do? They get into trouble. They've got to do something!"

"They drift to London. Most of them are provincials, but they all drift to London. A boy starts out in some blind-alley occupation in the provinces when he leaves school. Perhaps he has a stepmother or father. It's usually a step *something* that's to blame, you know. The stepfather, or mother, sees that he can get good money as a message boy and forces him to take a job."

"The job lasts for three or four years till the kid is about eighteen. Then his employer sacks him and engages in his place another youngster of fourteen. It saves the employer money. But the boy is out of a job. His unemployment money lasts only for a short period. He has no training for any other work. At the end of the period the step *something*, no longer seeing any income, boots him out.

"Then he drifts to London. They all come to London—to the Square. They think there's sure to be something doing here. Anyway, there are crowds and lights and some kind of adventure. Then he gets hungry, desperate. He's arrested on suspicion by some smart young policeman looking for something to do, gets a spell at Borstal, and that's the beginning. Or the end."

The telephone bell rang as she talked. Lady Anson took up the receiver.

"Oh, it's you," she said softly into the mouthpiece. "I've been hearing all about you. Oh, it doesn't matter who told me. You know I hear everything. . . . You've got something to tell me, haven't you?"

As she listened her eye caught mine. She smiled at me, but her whole attention was given to the unseen at the other end of the line.

"Are you coming over to tell me all about it?" she asked quietly. "I hear you were drunk last night. And all because of your new girl, eh? Well, well . . . Yes, do come over. . . ."

She put down the instrument.

"A good boy," she said. "He got drunk last night to celebrate a new girl, I think. I heard about it early this morning. I hear everything. He's a good boy, though. Has a fruit barrow, and is doing quite well now."

Her telephone goes at every hour of the day and night. Her boys telephone to tell her good news, sad news. Her friends telephone with offers of clothes and jobs. That telephone in that house in Pimlico has heard some funny things.

Once one of her boys telephoned about eleven o'clock at night.

"Can you lend me ten bob, lady?" he asked.

"Well," she said thoughtfully, "I think I can just about do it. What do you want it for at this time of night?"

"I'm going on a bust!"

Going on a bust means doing a job, cracking a crib, pinching. In other words, committing a robbery.

"Well, that's fine," she said, thinking hard. You must never lecture your boys. That way you lose their confidence for ever. "But what do you want with ten bob?"

"To go out to Hampstead in a taxi. It's easy, lady. A wholesale clothier and draper."

"I see."

"The taxi can wait for me. See?"

She saw all right. And now to turn his thoughts.

"But it's a bit late, don't you think," she said. "You know, I don't think it's such a good idea. You've got to find a fence at this time of night. And you'll hardly make enough to cover your taxi. I'd leave it to another night if I were you. Can you do with a couple of bob to-night for a doss?"

He could. His thoughts were successfully turned away from the projected crime. He had not thought there would be difficulty in finding a "fence"—a receiver of stolen goods.

"Then come over and see me," said Lady Anson, "I think I can just about fix you up for to-night."

And fix him up she did. There was no "bust" that night or any other night.

Once she went to a lot of trouble to find a pair of eye-glasses for a boy who complained that he could not see at night.

His friends were delighted.

"We're so glad you've found Jim glasses," they said, thanking her. "He's as blind as an owl. Last time we went on a bust he was so blind he left the money lying on the counter that we had pinched from the till!"

She laughed as she told me these things. You could not shock this woman if you tried. She is up against reality all the time. She does not find it shocking, although many times she finds it pathetic.

The telephone rang again as I was taking my leave. As she went to answer it I motioned that I would slip out and leave her to it. She nodded smilingly, a little absently. Her thoughts were already with the person needing her at the other end of the telephone line.

"Yes," she said softly into the mouthpiece; "oh, it's you . . ."

Another boy going on a bust? Another job found for a human derelict? Sad news about one of her favourites who had been picked up "on suspicion"? Some one offering to come down to the canteen for Christmas Day?

"Oh, yes, of course . . ."

Of course! Of course—whatever the demand. *Of course!* The grey head was bent over the telephone.

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